



College of Nursing  
Doctor of Nursing Practice

# Guidelines for DNP Practice Hours

## Guidelines for DNP Practice Hours

The Post Masters DNP student is required to complete a total of 1000 practice hours. Up to 600 hours from an MS program resulting in national certification (i.e. APRN) may be applied to that 1000 hours. Most students are left to complete 400 DNP practice hours as part of the Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree. These hours are completed under the supervision of the UMB faculty member teaching the DNP intensive courses.

Course	DNP Practice Hours
NU 761 DNP I	100
NU 762 DNP II	100
NU 763 DNP III	100
NU 764 DNP IV	100
Total= 400 hours	

The UMass DNP Program prepares graduates to attain the highest level of nursing practice and to demonstrate synthesis and application of all DNP Essentials. Practice hours should contribute to the preparation of the DNP student to attain the outcomes delineated in the DNP Essentials. These hours should include indirect care practice in the health care setting or related environments that broaden the experience of the student.

At the beginning of each DNP course, the student will develop 3-5 learning objectives to be attained through the DNP practice hours experience. Practice hour experiences should be designed to help students achieve the student developed learning objectives related to all of the *DNP Essentials*, role outcomes, and application of theory and evidence to practice.

DNP program practice experiences are designed to provide:

- Systematic opportunities for feedback and reflection.
- In-depth work/mentorship with experts in nursing, as well as other disciplines.
- Opportunities for meaningful student engagement within practice environments.
- Opportunities for building and assimilating knowledge for advanced nursing practice at a high level of complexity.
- Opportunities for further application, synthesis, and expansion of learning.
- Experience in the context of advanced nursing practice within which the final DNP Project is completed.
- Opportunities for integrating and synthesizing all of the *DNP Essentials* and role requirements necessary to demonstrate achievement of defined outcomes in an area of advanced nursing practice.<sup>1</sup>

### Hours Per Essential

Students are required to attain practice hours in all DNP Essentials to ensure the DNP Essential outcomes are attained. No minimum or maximum number of hours is required in

each DNP Essential as long as the student is able to demonstrate attainment of the DNP Essential Outcomes.

### **Hours at Place of Employment**

It is common for DNP students to be employed in settings or positions that appear to overlap with some of the outcomes delineated in the DNP Essentials. Practice hours and experiences should be linked to a well defined learning objective and provide an experience over and above the DNP student's individual job opportunities or responsibilities. The DNP student should have the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills beyond what is expected with employment and then to incorporate these into his or her nursing practice.<sup>1</sup>

### **Hours in Education/Academia**

Practice as a nurse educator should not be included in the DNP practice hours. The focus of a DNP program, including practice experiences and the DNP Project, should not be on the educational process, the academic curriculum, or on educating nursing students.

### **Hours working on DNP Scholarly Project**

Much of the time spent working on the DNP Scholarly Project will count towards the DNP practice hours. The elements of the DNP Project should be the same for all students and include planning, implementation, and evaluation components. As an outcome of the DNP program, students must demonstrate integrate of all *DNP Essentials* into their academic progress, however, all eight *Essentials* do not have to be demonstrated in the DNP Scholarly Project.

### **Practice Hours Log**

You must maintain a log of your DNP Practice Hours. For each DNP Intensive course, 100 hours must be completed, documented according to Essential and reflect the time spent to total the proper number of hours. Essentials and student goals should be included on the log with experiences that support attaining DNP Essential Outcomes and student goals. Please see log template. Log is to be completed using Google sheets and shared with DNP intensive course faculty, program director and DNP Scholarly Project committee members. See Practice Hour Log instructions for more details.

## **The DNP Essentials**

The DNP Essentials define the curricular elements that must be present in Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs. Required by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education for schools seeking accreditation for DNP programs, these *Essentials* outline the foundational competencies that are core to all advanced nursing practice roles, including the four nationally-recognized Advanced Practice Registered Nursing roles: nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives.

Each Essential has one or more outcomes associated with it. Those outcomes are what the student should use to develop the self directed learning objectives for DNP I, II, III and IV.

## **DNP Essentials Summary:**

### Essential I: Scientific Underpinnings for Practice

The advent of nursing science, specifically middle-range nursing theories, expanded the discipline of nursing. Thorough understanding of nursing theory provides a solid foundation for advanced nursing practice. The DNP degree prepares graduates to integrate nursing science with organization, biophysical, psychological, and analytical sciences (AACN, 2006). Furthermore, this DNP essential underscores the importance of using science-based concepts to evaluate and enhance health care delivery and improve patient outcomes.

### Essential II: Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Improvement

DNP graduates uniquely contribute to nursing science by evaluating, translating, and disseminating research into practice. This essential emphasizes the DNP graduate's role in assimilating nursing science and practice with the complex needs of humankind (AACN, 2006). Key skills include the development of clinical practice guidelines, designing evidence-based interventions, and evaluating practice outcomes.

### Essential III: Clinical Scholarship and Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Practice

Preparation in organizational leadership and systems level thinking enables DNP clinicians to create unique approaches to the complex issues facing modern health care. This DNP essential focuses on a DNP graduates role in assuring accountability of quality care and patient safety as well as critically examining ethical dilemmas inherent in patient care, health care organizations, and scientific research (AACN, 2006). Advanced education in systems leadership ensures that doctors of nursing practice possess the skills to facilitate meaningful organization-wide changes in health care delivery, and to interface with government officials to shape initiatives in the health care agenda.

### Essential IV: Information Systems/Technology and Patient Care Technology for the Improvement and Transformation of Health Care

Technology is at the center of safe, efficient, patient-centered care. This essential prepares doctors of nursing practice to utilize information and patient care technologies to support practice leadership and clinical decision making. Deep understanding of technology places the DNP at the forefront of healthcare delivery and equips them with the skills to participate in technological innovation, evaluate the appropriateness of healthcare consumer information, and participate in resulting legal and ethical issues (AACN, 2006).

### Essential V: Health Care Policy for Advocacy in Health Care

To engage actively in health care policy, the DNP graduate must learn to identify problems within the health care delivery system and to spearhead legislation through negotiating and consensus building (Dreher & Glasgow, 2010). This essential focuses on critically analyzing health policy with the goal of advocating for social justice and the nursing profession as a whole.

### Essential VI: Inter-Professional Collaboration for Improving Patient and Population Health Outcomes

The IOM defends the necessity of team-based care for the safety and wellbeing of all patients (IOM, 2001). This essential prepares DNP graduates to lead inter-professional teams in the analysis of multifaceted practice and systems issues through effective communication and collaborative skills (AACN, 2006). Doctors of nursing practice take a leadership role in development and implementation of practice models, standards of care, and other scholarly projects.

### Essential VII: Clinical Prevention and Population Health for Improving the Nation's Health

Nursing theory has its foundation in health promotion and risk reduction; however, the DNP degree further prepares graduates to evaluate and interpret epidemiological, biostatistical, occupational, and environmental information imperative to improving the health of both individuals and communities. This essential also equips doctors of nursing practice with the skills to synthesize the psychosocial dimensions and cultural impacts related to population health.

### Essential VIII: Advanced Nursing Practice

With the goal of improving patient outcomes, the doctor of nursing practice demonstrates advanced levels of clinical judgment, systems thinking, and delivery of evidence-based care (AACN, 2006). This essential focuses on conducting comprehensive needs assessments, mentoring other nurses, and guiding patients through complex situational transitions. For the Post MS DNP student with an MS and national certification (APRN) then up to 600 hours may be applied to the DNP Program under Essential VIII Advanced Nursing Practice.

## DNP Essential and DNP Essential Program Outcomes

DNP Essential	DNP Essential Program Outcome
<p><b><i>Essential I: Scientific Underpinnings for Practice</i></b></p>	<p>The DNP program prepares the graduate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrate nursing science with knowledge from ethics, the biophysical, psychosocial, analytical, and organizational sciences as the basis for the highest level of nursing practice.</li> <li>2. Use science-based theories and concepts to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• determine the nature and significance of health and health care delivery phenomena</li> <li>• describe the actions and advanced strategies to enhance, alleviate, and ameliorate health and health care delivery phenomena as appropriate; and</li> <li>• Evaluate outcomes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Develop and evaluate new practice approaches based on nursing theories and theories from other disciplines.</li> </ol>
<p><b><i>Essential II: Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Improvement and Systems Thinking</i></b></p>	<p>The DNP program prepares the graduate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and evaluate care delivery approaches that meet current and future needs of patient populations based on scientific findings in nursing and other clinical sciences, as well as organizational, political, and economic sciences.</li> <li>2. Ensure accountability for quality of health care and patient safety for populations with whom they work.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use advanced communication skills/processes to lead quality improvement and patient safety initiatives in health care systems.</li> <li>b. Employ principles of business, finance, economics, and health policy to develop and implement effective plans for practice-level and/or system-wide practice initiatives that will improve the quality of care delivery.</li> <li>c. Develop and/or monitor budgets for practice initiatives.</li> <li>d. Analyze the cost-effectiveness of practice initiatives accounting for risk and improvement of health care outcomes.</li> <li>e. Demonstrate sensitivity to diverse organizational cultures and populations, including patients and providers.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Develop and/or evaluate effective strategies for managing the ethical dilemmas inherent in patient care, the health care organization, and research.</li> </ol>
<p><b><i>Essential III: Clinical Scholarship and Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Practice</i></b></p>	<p>The DNP program prepares the graduate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use analytic methods to critically appraise existing literature and other evidence to determine and implement the best evidence for practice.</li> <li>2. Design and implement processes to evaluate outcomes of practice, practice patterns, and systems of care within a practice setting, health care organization, or community against national benchmarks to determine variances in practice outcomes and population trends.</li> <li>3. Design, direct, and evaluate quality improvement methodologies to promote safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, and patient-centered</li> </ol>

	<p>care.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Apply relevant findings to develop practice guidelines and improve practice and the practice environment.</li> <li>5. Use information technology and research methods appropriately to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collect appropriate and accurate data to generate evidence for nursing practice</li> <li>• inform and guide the design of databases that generate meaningful evidence for nursing practice</li> <li>• analyze data from practice</li> <li>• design evidence-based interventions</li> <li>• predict and analyze outcomes</li> <li>• examine patterns of behavior and outcomes</li> <li>• identify gaps in evidence for practice</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Function as a practice specialist/consultant in collaborative knowledge-generating research.</li> <li>7. Disseminate findings from evidence-based practice and research to improve healthcare outcomes</li> </ol>
<p><b><i>Essential IV: Information Systems/Technology and Patient Care Technology for the Improvement and Transformation of Health Care</i></b></p>	<p>The DNP program prepares the graduate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design, select, use, and evaluate programs that evaluate and monitor outcomes of care, care systems, and quality improvement including consumer use of health care information systems.</li> <li>2. Analyze and communicate critical elements necessary to the selection, use and evaluation of health care information systems and patient care technology.</li> <li>3. Demonstrate the conceptual ability and technical skills to develop and execute an evaluation plan involving data extraction from practice information systems and databases.</li> <li>4. Provide leadership in the evaluation and resolution of ethical and legal issues within healthcare systems relating to the use of information, information technology, communication networks, and patient care technology.</li> <li>5. Evaluate consumer health information sources for accuracy, timeliness, and appropriateness.</li> </ol>
<p><b><i>Essential V: Health Care Policy for Advocacy in Health Care</i></b></p>	<p>The DNP program prepares the graduate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Critically analyze health policy proposals, health policies, and related issues from the perspective of consumers, nursing, other health professions, and other stakeholders in policy and public forums.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate leadership in the development and implementation of institutional, local, state, federal, and/or international health policy.</li> <li>3. Influence policy makers through active participation on committees, boards, or task forces at the institutional, local, state, regional, national, and/or international levels to improve health care delivery and outcomes.</li> <li>4. Educate others, including policy makers at all levels, regarding nursing, health policy, and patient care outcomes.</li> <li>5. Advocate for the nursing profession within the policy and healthcare communities.</li> </ol>

	<p>6. Develop, evaluate, and provide leadership for health care policy that shapes health care financing, regulation, and delivery.</p> <p>7. Advocate for social justice, equity, and ethical policies within all healthcare arenas.</p>
<p><b><i>Essential VI: Interprofessional Collaboration for Improving Patient and Population Health Outcomes</i></b></p>	<p>The DNP program prepares the graduate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employ effective communication and collaborative skills in the development and implementation of practice models, peer review, practice guidelines, health policy, standards of care, and/or other scholarly products.</li> <li>2. Lead interprofessional teams in the analysis of complex practice and organizational issues.</li> <li>3. Employ consultative and leadership skills with intraprofessional and interprofessional teams to create change in health care and complex healthcare delivery systems.</li> </ol>
<p><b><i>Essential VII: Clinical Prevention and Population Health for Improving the Nation's Health</i></b></p>	<p>The DNP program prepares the graduate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze epidemiological, biostatistical, environmental, and other appropriate scientific data related to individual, aggregate, and population health.</li> <li>2. Synthesize concepts, including psychosocial dimensions and cultural diversity, related to clinical prevention and population health in developing, implementing, and evaluating interventions to address health promotion/disease prevention efforts, improve health status/access patterns, and/or address gaps in care of individuals, aggregates, or populations.</li> <li>3. Evaluate care delivery models and/or strategies using concepts related to community, environmental and occupational health, and cultural and socioeconomic dimensions of health.</li> </ol>
<p><b><i>Essential VIII: Advanced Nursing Practice</i></b></p>	<p>The DNP program prepares the graduate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct a comprehensive and systematic assessment of health and illness parameters in complex situations, incorporating diverse and culturally sensitive approaches.</li> <li>2. Design, implement, and evaluate therapeutic interventions based on nursing science and other sciences.</li> <li>3. Develop and sustain therapeutic relationships and partnerships with patients (individual, family or group) and other professionals to facilitate optimal care and patient outcomes.</li> <li>4. Demonstrate advanced levels of clinical judgment, systems thinking, and accountability in designing, delivering, and evaluating evidence-based care to improve patient outcomes.</li> <li>5. Guide, mentor, and support other nurses to achieve excellence in nursing practice.</li> <li>6. Educate and guide individuals and groups through complex health and situational transitions.</li> <li>7. Use conceptual and analytical skills in evaluating the links among practice, organizational, population, fiscal, and policy issues.</li> </ol>



## **DNP Essential and Examples of Experiences to apply to DNP Practice Hours**

### DNP Essential I: Scientific Underpinning of Practice

- Participate in research being conducted
- Become a member of a committee that is trying to solve a practice problem in a health care setting
- DNP Scholarly Project work that relates to integrating nursing science and theory to improve health

### DNP Essential II: Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Improvement and Systems Thinking

- Shadow/participate in QI meetings (skilled nursing homes have these monthly)
- Shadow/participate in organizational meetings related to patient safety
- Shadow the Patient Safety Officer in your organization
- Attend a lecture/seminar on patient safety
- Shadow organization leadership responsible for budgets
- Review a real budget with a nurse leader (ie a Director of nursing with a budget for his/her unit)
- Attend/participate in ethics rounds
- Attend/participate in Schwartz Rounds
- DNP Scholarly Project work that requires interacting with budgetary leaders for host site, IRB approval, any work with patient safety/HIPPA as it relates to the DNP Scholarly Project

### DNP Essential III: Clinical Scholarship and Analytical Methods for Evidenced- Based Practice

- Shadow nursing leadership and have him/her review the benchmarks used to measure staff performance
- Present a poster at a conference
- Speak at a local, regional or national conference
- Write an evidenced base article for publication
- DNP Scholarly Project work around taking the current literature and developing and implement evidenced based practice interventions
- The design, development and implementation of the DNP Scholarly Project
- DNP Scholarly Project work related to data collection, analysis, developing a database

### DNP Essential IV: Information Systems/Technology and Patient Care Technology or the Improvement and Transformation of Health Care

- Spend time shadowing the health IT department leadership
- Participate in the testing/develop of EHR programs
- Shadow the legal department as it relates to HIPAA/protection of patient information
- Explore social media use within your organization, how it is managed and safe guards for patient confidentiality

- DNP Scholarly Project work related to EHR use, development, changes (as they relate to the students Project)

#### DNP Essential V: Health Care Policy for Advocacy in Health Care

- Spend the day at the State House and observe a hearing where testimony is being given by a variety of stakeholders
- Attending a public health department meeting (town, city or state level)
- Attend a local hearing that relates to public health (ie City Council, School Committee)
- Participate in or Observe a protest/rally
- Attend your board of nursing's hearing (disciplinary, one seeking public comment, etc)
- Visit your elected official to discuss health related legislation
- Attend a town hall meeting for an elected official
- DNP Scholarly Project work related to evaluation of organizational policy and changes to organizational policy
- DNP Scholarly Project work that takes into account the various stakeholders involved in your project

#### DNP Essential VI: Interprofessional Collaboration for Improving Patient and Population Health Outcomes

- Take on a leadership role within an organization to complete a small project or clinical initiative
- Bring together a multidisciplinary team to analyze organizational issues and create change
- Lead a workgroup supported by a professional organization
- DNP Scholarly Project work related to establishing an interdisciplinary team and meeting with those team members to further the project
- DNP Scholarly Project work related to communicating the implementation of the project

#### DNP Essential VII: Clinical Prevention and Population Health for Improving the Nations Health

- Participate in a health promotion booth/fair
- Volunteer to administer flu shots for your DPH in your community
- Attend a local hearing on a public health concern (DPH)
- DNP Scholarly Project work related to health promotion efforts
- DNP Scholarly Project work related to conducting a needs assessment to determine the individual or aggregate's health

#### DNP Essential VIII: Advanced Nursing Practice

- Direct patient care
- Conference/CME related to the direct care/medical management of patients
- Shadow a provider at an underserved clinic
- Shadow a provider in a specialty outside of your expertise (hospice, OB, cardiology, derm, etc)
- Mentor a nurse, nurse practitioner or other nursing professional.

## **DNP Practice Hours Guidelines Basics**

### **Do's**

Count work on your DNP Scholarly Project towards your hours, especially meetings with stakeholders, leaders and your Project Committee

Explore local experiences that contribute to attaining the Essential Outcomes

Be proactive in seeking out leaders in various disciplines to ensure a variety of experiences

### **Don'ts**

Count the actual writing of your paper in your practice hours

Count time you are in your paid position and doing tasks in that role

Doing your literature review

### **Practice Hour Log Instructions**

The log is a tool to document the student's DNP practice hours and cross map those with the DNP Essentials and student goals. The spreadsheet is divided into separate sheets for each DNP intensive course (DNP I, DNP II, etc). Within each sheet, 8 columns represent the 8 DNP Essentials. The DNP student experience should be placed in the column representing the proper DNP Essential.

#### Definition of columns:

*Date*- date clinical hours completed

*Hours*- total hours of experience (may do ¼ increments)

*Organization/Location*- note the name of the host organization and location. For example, UMass Boston, Boston, MA

*Description of Experience*- Briefly describe the activity/experience you participated in.

Some activities may bridge multiple DNP Essentials. For example, you observed the Massachusetts Coalition of NPs President lead a meeting on the status of the current NP independent practice bill for a full 2 hours. This experience could go under leadership (VI) or Health Policy (V). Depending on your goals, you may opt to put the time spent under V or VI OR you may split the time. In this case it was a 2-hour meeting, so you could put 1 hour under VI and one hour under V.

In the same case, you may want to put the hours under health policy (V) but also to acknowledge that it was an experience with leadership. You could document the experience, but put 0 hours under leadership (VI) and the full two hours under health policy (5).

How the student chooses to document DNP practice hours depends on the individual student goals.