

MORAVIAN
UNIVERSITY

Helen S. Breidegam
School of Nursing

DNP Handbook Supplement
Doctor of Nursing Practice Program

2025-2026

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The Helen S. Breidegam School of Nursing Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Student Handbook Supplement is designed to complement the Graduate Nursing Student Handbook.

The Doctor of Nursing Practice degree is a practice-focused doctorate that prepares graduates to become leaders in healthcare, affecting change in patient outcomes through the implementation of best evidence for practice improvement. The Doctor of Nursing Practice is the terminal degree in clinical nursing. The program is built upon the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Essentials (2021).

History of Moravian University's Doctor of Nursing Practice Program

The Post-Master's Doctor of Nursing Practice Program was approved by the faculty of Moravian University during the 2023-2024 academic year. The first cohort of doctoral students was admitted in the summer of 2024 to begin classes in the fall of 2024.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing published *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* in 2021. This is their most recent document addressing the necessary educational framework to ensure a level of quality and consistency in the education of nurses within colleges and universities. This document describes the necessary curriculum content and competencies expected of graduates of nursing programs at both the baccalaureate and graduate levels. (AACN, 2021).

The Essentials (AACN, 2021) includes ten domains representing professional nursing practice. Each domain identifies competencies expected of nurses at both an entry level and at an advanced level. Each competency has sub-competencies which build from entry to practice to more advanced knowledge and levels of practice. The competencies are general enough to be applicable to a variety of practice settings, yet unique enough to capture the essence that is inherent in the profession of nursing. The identified domains are:

Domain 1	Knowledge for Nursing Practice
Domain 2	Person-Centered Care
Domain 3	Population Health
Domain 4	Scholarship for Nursing Practice
Domain 5	Quality & Safety
Domain 6	Interprofessional Partnerships
Domain 7	Systems-Based Practice
Domain 8	Informatics and Healthcare Technologies
Domain 9	Professionalism
Domain 10	Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development

(AACN, 2021)

AACN's Essentials (2021) also integrates eight concepts through the domains and competencies. These concepts are integral to the practice of nursing. The identified concepts are:

Clinical Judgment
Communication
Compassionate Care
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Ethics
Evidence Based Practice
Health Policy
Social Determinants of Health

(AACN 2021)

Doctor of Nursing Practice Program Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program, graduates will be prepared to:

1. Synthesize new and prior learning for clinical decision-making, policy development, and healthcare leadership.
2. Analyze population health perspectives in provision of safe, person-centered care to foster optimal health outcomes and well-being for diverse individuals, families, communities, and populations.
3. Conduct scholarly inquiry using information technology to synthesize best evidence to inform nursing practice, education, research, and policy.
4. Perform quality improvement initiatives that ensure cost-effective healthcare, promoting a culture of safety at the individual and systems levels.
5. Refine one's own professional identity through adherence to professional standards of practice and code of ethics.
6. Create a culture of collaboration across disciplines through transformational leadership.

Required Courses

The MSN to DNP program requires successful completion of 35 credits, including a DNP project and a minimum of 1000 post-baccalaureate practice hours. Hours previously completed at the graduate level will be primary source verified at the time of admission to the program.

Course number	Course title	Credit hours
NURS 800	Scholarly Writing	3
NURS 802	Epidemiology & Bioinformatics	3
NURS 804	Policy, Quality & Safety	3
NURS	Information Technology & Biostatistics	2
NURS 810	Foundations of Evidence Based Practice	3

NURS 811	Evidence Based Practice Methods	3
NURS 820	Population Health, Ethics & Social Responsibility	3
NURS 535	Health Economics	3
Leadership Elective	BMGT 508: Developing Leadership Competencies and Leading Teams or other elective option	3
NURS 901	Evidence Based Project: Systems Thinking 1	3
NURS 902	Evidence Based Project: Systems Thinking 2	3
NURS 903	Evidence Based Project: Systems Thinking 3	3

Note: A maximum of three graduate courses or nine credits may be transferred into the Moravian MSN DNP Program with transfer approval of the Directors of the MSN and MSN/NP Programs.

Doctor of Nursing Practice Project

As a requirement for graduation, all students must complete a scholarly project demonstrating their ability to use the best available evidence to improve health, practice, or policy outcomes. A variety of course assignments will help guide students toward identifying a problem. Students will be mentored throughout their project, from identification to proposal, implementation, and evaluation. Students will lead a DNP project team consisting of a doctorally prepared faculty member and another team member with a doctoral degree. In some instances, an additional team member with a graduate degree will be included as a subject matter expert. Once the DNP student identifies a potential problem, the student will assess the situation and use evidence to inform their process in developing, implementing, and evaluating the outcomes and processes involved.

Students must obtain approval for their DNP Project idea from the Program Director and/or DNP faculty. The student's proposal will be presented to and approved by the DNP Project Team (described below) prior to implementation. Institutional Review Board approval will be sought as appropriate. Faculty approval will also be sought. Students may need to present the project according to the facility's established processes, e.g., Nursing Research Council approval. Viable solutions to problems should be sustainable and have an impact on systems of care and/or health policy at the local, regional, national, or international levels.

Doctor of Nursing Practice Project Team

The DNP student will lead the DNP Project Team. The team will consist of at least two doctorally prepared team members, one of whom must be a faculty member from the Moravian University School of Nursing. In cases where subject matter expertise is needed, an additional team member with a graduate degree may be included as part of the DNP Project Team. DNP Project Team composition will be approved by the DNP Program Director

Doctor of Nursing Practice Project Proposal

As students identify a potential project, they will need to gather preliminary information. Each project will be specific to the site of implementation, and the student needs to determine if the potential issue is a concern at the facility in question. For example, the student finds in the literature that the national average for heart failure readmissions is 25% and wants to develop a program to decrease readmissions in this patient population. If the facility in question has an 11% readmission rate, this project may not be a priority for them at this time as their rate is less than half of the national average. Just because something is a problem in one area doesn't mean it is a priority concern in all areas.

Once there seems to be justification that the identified problem is actually a problem at the selected site, the student will need to obtain approval of the DNP Project topic from the DNP Program Director or DNP faculty. The student will work with their faculty mentor and the DNP Project Team to develop an evidence-based proposal addressing the identified problem. The student will present their problem and proposed intervention to their DNP Project Team for approval. This presentation should include the identification of the problem, justification that it is, in fact, a problem at this site, and a proposed evidence-informed solution. A timeline and budgetary considerations should be included in the proposal. Once the project proposal has been approved by the team, the student will apply to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if necessary. The student will also obtain approval from the practice site. If both the practice site and the university have an IRB, the IRB of record needs to be determined.

Doctor of Nursing Practice Project Implementation

The DNP Project must have the approval of the DNP Project Team member and the practice site prior to project implementation. University and site specific requirements must be met prior to project implementation. These include IRB approval(s) and the institutional or health system's Nursing Research Council approval. Students must have regular check-ins with faculty during the implementation and evaluation stages of the project.

Doctor of Nursing Practice Project Completion

Students who have completed all other required coursework but have not yet finished their project will enroll each term until the project evaluation, all required project hours, and the final presentation are approved. The grade for the final project course, NURS 903, will stay as incomplete until all project requirements are met. The student must submit a final, approved Doctor of Nursing Practice project manuscript and poster.

Time limit for program completion

The Doctor of Nursing Practice degree must be completed within 7 years from the time of admission. This time period includes any leave of absence. An extension of time may be requested from the Student Progression and Development Team, but it is not guaranteed.

Doctor of Nursing Practice Hours

The Doctor of Nursing Practice requires a minimum of 1000 post-baccalaureate practice hours. These hours include work in developing, implementing, and evaluating the Doctor of Nursing Practice project. Hours may also include professional development related to the project or attainment of the competencies defined by AACN in *The Essentials*. A gap analysis will be conducted and completed for all students upon admission to the MSN to DNP program and the verification form file in the student record. Practice hours completed as a requirement of the student's prior graduate program(s) will be verified by a representative of the previously completed graduate program(s).

DNP Students will create a portfolio on Canvas to showcase their attainment of the competencies found within the AACN Essentials domains.

Examples of practice hours related to the AACN Essentials

The following are some examples of activities that would fall under the Domains for Nursing found in the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (2021) *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education*. This does not represent an all-inclusive list.

Domain 1 - Knowledge for Nursing Practice

- DNP project development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination
- Developing a table of evidence or annotated bibliography

Domain 2 - Person-Centered Care

- DNP project development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination

Domain 3 - Population Health

- DNP project development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination
- Conducting a windshield or community assessment

Domain 5 - Quality & Safety

- Attendance or participation in quality or performance improvement meetings
- Attendance or participation in organizational meetings or presentations related to patient safety
- CITI Training
- IRB preparation and application
- DNP project development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination

Domain 6 - Interprofessional Partnerships

- DNP project development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination
- Leading the DNP Project Team

Domain 7 - Systems-Based Practice

- Attendance at organizational meetings related to the environment of care
- Review of operations activities (budget, staffing, strategic planning, etc.) with organizational leaders

- Schwartz Rounds attendance
- DNP project development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination

Domain 8 - Informatics and Healthcare Technologies

- Attendance or participation at information technology or data analytics meetings
- Electronic health Record program selection, testing, personalization
- Evaluation or adoption of healthcare technologies
- Evaluation of social media in healthcare situations (safeguards, policies, etc)
- DNP project development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination

Domain 9 – Professionalism

- DNP project development, implementation, evaluation and dissemination
- Leading the DNP Project Team

Domain 10 - Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development

- DNP project development, implementation, evaluation and dissemination
- Leading the DNP Project Team

Degree Requirements

All required courses in the program must be successfully completed. Courses that have been transferred in or approved for substitution are considered completed. Students must achieve a cumulative Grade Point Average of 3.0 or above on a 4.0 scale; must have a completed and approved project; provide an electronic copy of the final project and poster; and must have documentation of completion of 1000 post-baccalaureate practice hours.

References

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2021). *The Essentials: Core competencies for professional nursing education*. Accessible online at <https://www.aacnnursing.org/essentials>

APRN Consensus Work Group & the National Council of State Boards of Nursing APRN Advisory Committee. (2008). *Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification & Education*. Accessible online at https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/Consensus_Model_for_APRN_Regulation_July_2008.pdf

National Task Force (NTF) for Quality Nurse Practitioner Education. (2022). Standards is committed to Standards for Quality Nurse Practitioner Education. Accessible online at <https://www.nonpf.org/page/NTFStandards>