

NURSING PRACTICE, DOCTOR OF (D.N.P.)/PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER, CERTIFICATE IN (POST-PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE) [DUAL DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE]

Advanced study in nursing is available through a dual degree and certificate program sponsored by the School of Nursing.

The program allows students to earn a post-professional Certificate in Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner and a Doctor of Nursing Practice with a minimum of 51 credits rather than the 60 credits necessary if the two plans of study were pursued separately. This efficiency lowers the overall cost of tuition while also reducing time to earning both degrees.

Program goals

Graduates will achieve advanced nursing practice competencies by demonstrating:

- Systems and organizational leadership
- Implementation of advanced nursing practice interventions
- Effective use of research and technology
- Systematic evaluation of interventions and outcomes
- Use of quality and safety outcomes to evaluate practice improvement initiatives
- Skills in using evidence-based practice to achieve sustainable practice change
- Advanced decision-making skills founded in ethics and the highest level of nursing practice
- Leadership strategies to influence health policies
- Interprofessional collaboration in health care systems

Among the many benefits offered by participation in the dual degree and certificate are the following:

- Graduates are eligible to be dually certified in two population foci increasing their employment opportunities

Students are eligible to take the nurse practitioner certification exam at the conclusion of their clinical rotations, two semesters prior to graduation, and be awarded the post-professional certificate. At the completion of the program, graduates will be awarded a doctoral degree.

Student learning outcomes

See each program page for student learning outcomes.

Other information

Advising

The plan of study is developed by the program director, who oversees both the certificate and doctoral programs. Advising is a joint effort

between the program coordinator and program director until the students start taking their family nurse practitioner population-specific courses. Once the students enter population-specific courses, the certificate lead will take a more direct role in student advising. The program coordinator will keep students apprised of pertinent registration, School of Nursing and university information through the use of the student email group and other methods.

Admission requirements

By submitting their application, students are applying to both programs simultaneously.

To be considered for admission to the School of Nursing, applicants must:

1. Be eligible for readmission or be in good standing at the last college or university attended
2. Meet the **general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School**
3. Submit a complete application with all required materials to the School of Nursing
4. Have an earned master's or doctoral degree with a cumulative GPA of 3.0
5. Have completed three separate comprehensive nursing graduate-level lifespan courses in advanced pathophysiology, advanced health assessment and advanced pharmacology
6. Have an earned nursing degree at the baccalaureate level or above from an accredited nursing school (e.g. ACEN, CCNE, CNEA)
7. Have a current, unrestricted R.N. license from a U.S. state or territory at the time admissions application is submitted (Applicants without a current R.N. license in the U.S. should consult with the **Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools** and the **Virginia Board of Nursing** for the steps needed to obtain a Virginia R.N. license.)
8. Provide additional information with the application according to the English language proficiency guidelines for applicants who are international or non-native English speakers without a degree from a U.S. high school, college or university (Additional information can be found on the 'Required materials' tab of the **VCU International Admissions website**.)

Note: Requests for exceptions to the above criteria will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Degree requirements

As standalone programs, the D.N.P. comprises 39 credits while the certificate requires 21 credits. The dual degree and certificate program allows students to share nine credits, therefore decreasing total credits to completion from 60 to 51.

The following courses from the certificate curriculum are shared and satisfy requirements in both programs.

Course	Title	Hours
NURS 522	Psychopharmacology for Advanced Practice (satisfies elective in D.N.P.)	3
NURS 597 & NURS 641	Psychiatric Mental Health Practicum I and Psychiatric Mental Health Practicum II (taken together satisfy six credits toward NURS 664 in D.N.P.)	6

Students will be simultaneously enrolled in the D.N.P. and certificate. They will complete the certificate requirements and be eligible for their population certification exam prior to being awarded the doctoral degree.

Course	Title	Hours
D.N.P. requirements		
NURS 605	Statistical Methods for Quality Improvement	3
NURS 606	Evaluating Evidence to Improve Health Outcomes	3
NURS 607	Epidemiology and Population Health	3
NURS 608	Quality Improvement in Practice	3
NURS 610	Health Information and Emerging Health Care Technologies	3
NURS 621	Leadership and Organizational Systems	3
NURS 638	Health Policy Leadership and Advocacy	3
NURS 664	DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum (six credits satisfied by NURS 597 and NURS 641)	12
NURS 665	DNP Project I: Proposal Development	3
Elective (satisfied by NURS 522)		3
Certificate requirements		
NURS 521	Psychiatric Disorders Across the Lifespan	4
NURS 522	Psychopharmacology for Advanced Practice	3
NURS 597	Psychiatric Mental Health Practicum I	2
NURS 598	Managing Psychiatric Disorders in Special and Vulnerable Populations	2
NURS 602	Psychotherapy: Theory and Practice	2
NURS 641	Psychiatric Mental Health Practicum II	4
NURS 659	Psychiatric Mental Health Practicum III	4
Total Hours		51

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this dual degree and certificate program is 51.

Sample plan of study

Year one		
Fall semester		Hours
NURS 608	Quality Improvement in Practice	3
NURS 610	Health Information and Emerging Health Care Technologies	3
NURS 638	Health Policy Leadership and Advocacy	3
Term Hours:		9
Spring semester		
NURS 521	Psychiatric Disorders Across the Lifespan	4
NURS 606	Evaluating Evidence to Improve Health Outcomes	3
NURS 607	Epidemiology and Population Health	3
Term Hours:		10
Summer semester		
NURS 522	Psychopharmacology for Advanced Practice	3

NURS 597	Psychiatric Mental Health Practicum I	2
Term Hours:		5
Year two		
Fall semester		
NURS 598	Managing Psychiatric Disorders in Special and Vulnerable Populations	2
NURS 602	Psychotherapy: Theory and Practice	2
NURS 641	Psychiatric Mental Health Practicum II	4
Term Hours:		8
Spring semester		
NURS 621	Leadership and Organizational Systems	3
NURS 659	Psychiatric Mental Health Practicum III	4
Term Hours:		7
Summer semester		
NURS 605	Statistical Methods for Quality Improvement	3
NURS 665	DNP Project I: Proposal Development	3
Term Hours:		6
Year three		
Fall semester		
NURS 664	DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum	6
Term Hours:		6
Total Hours:		51

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this dual degree and certificate program is 51.

Contact

Shelly Smith, D.N.P., APRN-BC, FNAP
 Clinical associate professor and director for advanced nursing practice programs, Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems
 sporter@vcu.edu
 (804) 828-0724

Additional contact

Shelley Conroy, Ed.D., RN, CNE
 Associate dean, graduate programs and department chair, Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems
 conroys@vcu.edu
 (804) 828-3986