NURSING PRACTICE, DOCTOR OF (D.N.P.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN NURSING LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCE

The D.N.P. program is strongly positioned to prepare students to improve the quality of health care delivery and patient outcomes. Graduates of the D.N.P. program at VCU will be prepared to improve health care delivery by critically appraising scientific evidence to inform practice, sharing clinical expertise in collaborative and dynamic environments, leading interprofessional teams, providing systems leadership for sustainable best practices in clinical settings and influencing health policy. Building on the university's mission to improve human health, VCU D.N.P. graduates will translate evidence that leads to sustainable practice change for improved patient quality and safety outcomes.

The 62-credit hour B.S. to D.N.P. pathway offers a concentration in nursing leadership and organizational science, which will prepare students to serve in administrative nurse leader roles in a variety of health care settings. The purpose of the nursing leadership and organizational science concentration is to prepare nurses for leadership and management roles in health care settings. The courses for the concentration focus on financial management, human resource management, performance improvement and leadership at the unit or organizational level. Course work will provide students with the skills for creating safe, healthy environments that support the work of the health care team, contribute to patient engagement, improve the patient experience and improve patient outcomes.

Program goals

Students will achieve D.N.P.-level competencies by demonstrating:

1. Use of quality and safety outcomes to evaluate practice improvement initiatives
2. Skills in using evidence-based practice to achieve sustainable practice change
3. Advanced decision-making skills founded in ethics and the highest level of nursing practice
4. Leadership strategies to influence health policies
5. Interprofessional collaboration in health care systems

Student learning outcomes

At the completion of the D.N.P. program, students will have the knowledge and skills to:

1. Synthesize knowledge from nursing and other sciences to lead efforts to promote health and improve outcomes of individuals, populations and systems

2. Demonstrate integration of population health concepts in systems-based care delivery models designed to promote quality, safety and excellence in advanced nursing practice

3. Lead the development, implementation and evaluation of policy initiatives to improve quality and safety in health care systems

4. Translate and disseminate evidence-based practices toward improving health care outcomes and reducing disparities

5. Lead innovative approaches in the application of health information technology that supports delivery and evaluation of patient-centered care

6. Apply principles of ethical and moral reasoning in advanced practice roles to lead to sustainable change in health care

7. Demonstrate advanced levels of clinical and ethical judgement, systems thinking and accountability in designing, delivering and evaluating evidence-based care to improve patient outcomes

Concentration-specific outcomes for nursing leadership and organizational science

Students who chose this concentration will not directly serve individuals or populations. Students will serve organizations. Students who select this concentration will be able to meet the following outcomes:

1. Provide leadership, oversight and management of a unit, organization or health system to optimize operations and improve care and outcomes
2. Work within a collaborative and interprofessional environment to influence improvement in the patient experience of care (including quality and satisfaction), improving the health of populations and reducing the per-capita cost of health care

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the **Graduate School website** and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students.

Degree candidacy requirements

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master's or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student's graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student's faculty regarding the student's academic achievements and the student's readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements.

Graduation requirements

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements.

Other information

VCU School of Nursing Student Policy and Information handbooks (http://nursing.vcu.edu/about-us/resources/) are located on the school's website.

Our international and non-native English-speaking students bring different perspectives and new thinking to our nursing programs. To ensure that all incoming student are prepared for the school's academic rigor, all international applicants and non-native English speaking applicants without a degree from a U.S. high school, college or university must provide additional information with their applications according to the English language proficiency guidelines on the program admission tab.

While an unrestricted R.N. license from a U.S. state or territory is not required for admission to the Ph.D. program, if a student plans to engage in research activities that require licensure, the student will need to obtain a license. The student will work with the faculty adviser to determine if a license is needed or to consider alternative methods for conducting the research. Students can consult with **CGFNS International** and the **Virginia** or relevant state or territory board of nursing for the steps needed to obtain an R.N. license.

A background check and drug screen are not required for admission but may be required by an agency/site in which the student is conducting research.

Admission requirements

Degree:	Semester(s) of entry:	Deadline dates:	Test requirements:
D.N.P.	Fall	Rolling admissions	

Note: No admissions test is required for this program.

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

1. Meet the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements/)
2. Submit all official college transcripts from each college attended, including concurrent college enrollment transcripts
3. Be eligible for readmission or be in good standing at the last college or university attended

4. Be a baccalaureate (or higher) graduate of an accredited (ACEN, CCNE or CNEA) nursing program
5. Have a current unrestricted R.N. license or authorization to practice as an R.N. in the U.S.
6. Submit three academic and/or professional references
7. Write a personal statement
8. Submit a resume/CV
9. 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 (https://www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/international/graduate-applicants/#tabs-193125)**.)

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

In accordance with VCU's Graduate School policy, a maximum of 50 percent of the didactic hours required for a graduate degree or any graduate certificate program may be transferred from another institution and, if not applied previously toward another degree, may be applied toward a degree. Prerequisite course work that does not count toward the VCU degree may not be transferred.

Degree requirements

The post-bachelor's pathway to the D.N.P. with a concentration in nursing leadership and organizational sciences is a 63-credit-hour degree program that requires no thesis. The focus of the program is quality and safety in advanced practice nursing. The curriculum prepares graduates to function as nursing administration leaders and executives. Course work culminates in the successful completion of a D.N.P. project focusing on a quality or patient safety issue in the student's specific patient population or area of focus.

The purpose of the nursing leadership and organizational sciences concentration is to prepare nurses for leadership and management roles in health care settings. The required courses focus on skills for creating safe, healthy environments that support the work of the health care team, contribute to patient engagement, improve the patient experience and improve patient outcomes. The concentration courses address financial management, human resource management, performance improvement and leadership at the unit or organizational level.

Curriculum requirements

Course	Title	Hours
Core courses		
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 [1]	3
NURS 621	Leadership and Organizational Systems	3
NURS 638	Health Policy Leadership and Advocacy	3

NURS 661	DNP Residency I: Mentored Practicum	6
NURS 663	DNP Residency II: Mentored Practicum	6
NURS 664	DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum (variable credit course repeated for 12 credits)	4
NURS 665	DNP Project I: Proposal Development	3
Concentration courses		
NURS 515	Holistic Leadership in Health Care Delivery	3
NURS 517	Organizational Science Implications for Human and Material Resource Management	3
NURS 593	Project and Planned Change Management	3
NURS 604	Applied Budgeting and Finance	3
NURS 628	Practicum in Nursing Leadership and Organizational Science	5
Electives		
Select six credits of electives in consultation with the adviser.		6
Total Hours		**63**

1

Students who have completed NURS 516 in another program may use it to fulfill the requirement for NURS 610.

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this degree is 63.

Practice hours/residency requirement

National accreditation requirements stipulate the completion of a minimum of 1,000 clinical hours for students in the post-bachelor's pathway. These 1,000 hours are divided into two major foci: direct patient care clinical hours and residency hours. The program will include 600 direct patient care clinical hours. During this clinical component of the program, students will focus on their role as a care provider, which includes the diagnosis and management of patients appropriate to their concentration. Each clinical course has objectives, assignments and products that demonstrate student achievement of advanced practice patient care competencies. In order to achieve the D.N.P. essential competencies, students will then complete an additional 400 hours that focus on developing the skills needed to lead efforts to improve care outcomes in populations of patients.

D.N.P. program clinical experiences are developed to assist the students achieve the D.N.P. essential competencies. For example, students may work with the quality improvement team in a particular setting to develop and implement an improvement initiative; they may develop an evidence-based practice guideline for a patient problem; or they may develop a policy change initiative in concert with their professional association. The practice experiences, settings and focus of residency hours are individualized and developed mutually by the student and the faculty adviser. Each residency course has individualized objectives, assignments and products that demonstrate student achievement of specific D.N.P. essential competencies. Qualified preceptors, based on their expertise and experience, will be identified to provide supervision as needed to support particular practice experiences. Preceptors and faculty advisers will all contribute to evaluation of student success in meeting the identified objectives developed for each clinical and residency course.

Final evaluation of clinical courses is the responsibility of the clinical faculty for the course. Final evaluation of all residency requirements is the responsibility of the faculty for the course. Residency and clinical courses are graded on a pass-fail basis. The completed assignments from clinical and residency courses culminate in a professional e-portfolio that demonstrates achievement of all course objectives, student learning outcomes and the D.N.P. essentials.

Project requirements

The D.N.P. program culminates in the successful completion of a scholarly work — the D.N.P. project. In collaboration with faculty and their project team, students design, implement and evaluate a quality/safety project that is focused in their specialized clinical area. The final product is a scholarly manuscript describing the project that is suitable for publication in a professional journal. The project teams consist of doctorally prepared content experts, one of whom must be from the practice site, and select faculty. The curriculum is designed so that students begin planning their D.N.P. project during initial course work and complete the project in their final semester of study. Dissemination of the D.N.P. project findings occur during the final semester as part of the course work.

Students who complete the requirements for this concentration will receive a Doctor of Nursing Practice.

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