

NURSING PRACTICE, DOCTOR OF (D.N.P.)

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 40-credit online post-master's to D.N.P. pathway is designed to accommodate master's-prepared nurses already established in advanced practice registered nurse or nurse executive positions. The program prepares these nurses to lead change in the clinical setting. The online format with students coming to campus three times per year provides working nurses a flexible option.

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 handbooks are located in Canvas.

Visit the School of Nursing website for program-specific application instructions (<http://nursing.vcu.edu/admission/application-instructions/dnp/>).

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. 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 (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements/>)
3. Submit a complete application with all required materials to the School of Nursing
4. Have an earned master's or doctoral degree in nursing from an accredited nursing school (e.g. ACEN, CCNE, CNEA). Applicants with entry to practice level Master's degrees are not eligible for this program.
5. 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 (<https://www.cgfn.org/>) and the Virginia Board of Nursing (<https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/Boards/Nursing/>) for the steps needed to obtain a Virginia R.N. license.)
6. 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://admissions.vcu.edu/apply-to-vcu/international/graduate/>).

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

Degree requirements

A minimum of 37 graduate credit hours are required for the Doctor of Nursing Practice program.

In addition to **general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements**, a candidate for the D.N.P. degree must be recommended by the faculty and must:

1. Meet academic requirements of the Graduate School
2. Complete all requirements for the prescribed curriculum within eight calendar years of the first registration for work to be credited toward the degree
3. Earn a minimum grade of B or pass grade in all nursing courses
4. Earn a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all work presented for graduation
5. Conform to School of Nursing policies in respect to satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading for course work and D.N.P. project

The degree will be granted only after all requirements have been fulfilled and all fees to the university have been paid. Degrees are not granted in absentia unless written request is made to the dean and permission is granted.

Curriculum requirements

Course	Title	Hours
NURS 733	DNP Knowledge Synthesis and Competency Assessment	1
NURS 744	Foundations in Knowledge and Scholarship for Advanced Nursing Practice	3
NURS 745	Holistic and Ethical Leadership for Advanced Nursing Practice Roles	3
NURS 749	Epidemiology and Population Health	3
NURS 757	Health information Technology and Informatics for Advanced Nursing Practice	3
NURS 758	Health Policy and Health Economics for Nurse Leaders	3
NURS 762	Scientific Foundations for System-Based Care and Interprofessional Partnerships	3
NURS 764	Scientific Foundations for Healthcare Safety and Improvement	3
NURS 793	Planned Change Management for DNP Projects	3
NURS 794	DNP Project I: Project Planning and Implementation	3
NURS 795	DNP Project II: Project Implementation and Evaluation	3
Electives chosen with advisor approval ¹		6
Total Hours		37

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this degree is 37.

1

If no previous graduate level course on 3P's (advanced physical, physiologic and pharmacologic health sciences), then take NURS 694 in place of an elective.

Practice hours/residency requirement

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing requires a minimum of 500 practice hours focused on advanced level nursing practice to support advanced competency development. The 500-practice hour requirement includes direct and/or indirect practice experiences. The 500 practice hours are the minimum number of hours a student will need to complete to demonstrate the advanced-level competencies delineated in the Essentials. This practice hour requirement applies to all students in any advanced-level program.

In the D.N.P. program these hours are structured into the curriculum via the six credit hours of D.N.P. residency courses. These practicum/residency hours focus on building skills to lead transformative change in health care rather than direct patient care skills. The practice/residency hours are devoted to completion of a D.N.P. project under the mentorship and supervision of course faculty and an organizational sponsor. The practicum/residency experience will vary based on the nature of the D.N.P. project. Each D.N.P. project will have individual project objectives and deliverables. Final evaluation of all residency requirements is the responsibility of the course faculty. Residency courses are graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. The school has identified criteria that will trigger an advisor's decision to travel to the site for direct observation, such as project sponsor concerns regarding student performance or unsatisfactory communications with student or a project sponsor that cannot be resolved by telephone or video conference. The completed assignments from each residency course culminates in a professional portfolio that demonstrates achievement of all residency course objectives by the completion of the six required residency credits.

Project requirements

The D.N.P. program culminates in the successful completion of a scholarly work called 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 on a system change in a practice setting. The final product is a scholarly manuscript describing the project that is suitable for publication in a professional journal. The project teams consist of a doctorally prepared faculty sponsor, an organizational sponsor with site-specific system expertise and project oversight authority, key organizational stakeholders, and additional content experts as needed. 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 degree will receive a Doctor of Nursing Practice.

Contact

Debra Shockey, D.N.P., RN, CPNP-PC
 Program director, graduate practice programs
 dpshockey (dpshockey@vcu.edu)@vcu.edu (sporter@vcu.edu)
 (804) 828-1930

Additional contact

Fonda Neal
 Graduate program coordinator
 fneal@vcu.edu
 (804) 828-0836

Program website: nursing.vcu.edu/programs/dnp (<http://www.nursing.vcu.edu/programs/dnp/>)