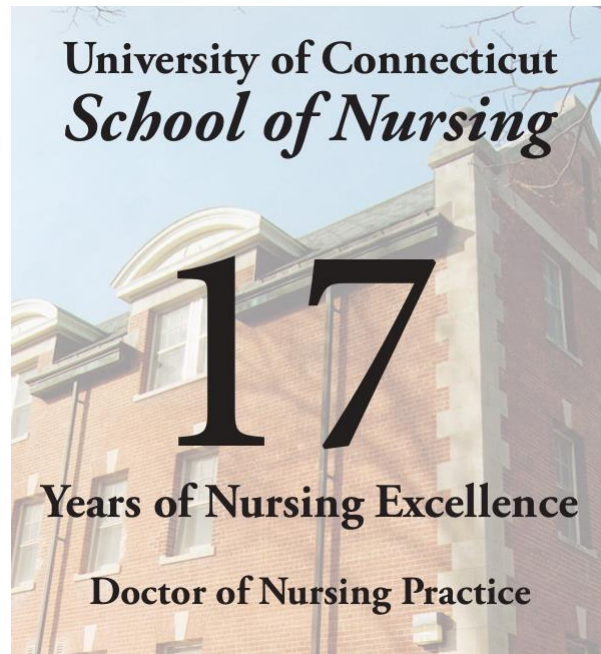


2025 - 2026 DNP Student Advisement Handbook



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Introduction

This DNP Advisement Handbook is a reference for faculty and DNP students at the UConn | Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing (EDSON). The document presents information for doctoral students enrolled in the DNP Program. We hope you will find the document helpful. Always seek clarification for any questions with your Major Advisor or Director of the DNP Program.

Mission and Purpose of the DNP at the EDSON

The Mission Statement for the University of Connecticut defines the institution as both the land-grant and the public research University of the State of Connecticut. As such, the potential range of university programs and activities is extremely broad. The mandate of the University is to be the center within the state for graduate and professional training, research, and public service. As a public university, the University of Connecticut must not only be responsive to the needs of society, but also be capable of anticipating such needs.

Within this context, the University has identified specific responsibilities associated with its mission. Among these is the concentration on the excellence of the graduate and advanced professional degree programs for which it has primary responsibilities in the public sector. These include doctoral degree programs in all fields.

The mission and goals of the EDSON mirror, complement, and enhance those of the University. The mission of the School of Nursing is to provide quality, public-university based nursing education at the undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education levels. The programs are designed to be responsive to the dynamic and changing health care needs of the people of the state, while using established nursing knowledge and creating and testing new nursing theory.

The Doctor of Nursing Practice program at the EDSON offers both a BS-DNP and a Post-Masters DNP. Overall, the DNP program provides a terminal degree in nursing practice for those currently engaged in all types of advanced nursing practice. DNP prepared nurses focus on the science of practice-focused scholarship.

Terminal Objectives of the DNP Program

1. Apply strategies for sustainable leadership and advocacy of the nursing profession and populations through translation of theory and evidence into practice.
2. Develop and evaluate new practice approaches based on evidence-based processes, scientific knowledge, and theory from nursing and other related disciplines to improve health care safety, quality, and person-centered care.
3. Lead effectively in the micro- and macro-systems level to create policies that promote safe, high-quality and cost-effective health care, social justice, and health equity for all.
4. Analyze and evaluate data-driven approaches using health informatics and

implementation science to improve individual, population and/or systems-level outcomes.

5. Create and maintain intra-professional and inter-professional teams in response to emerging health care challenges with collaboration from clinical partners and community stakeholders to implement and evaluate system-level innovation that promotes health equity.

Our PRAXIS

The philosophy of the School of Nursing is directed by six guiding principles:

- Professionalism in behavior, presentation, and conduct
- Respectful of the richness and diversity of others and of self
- Accountability for my actions
- eXcellence in Scholarship, practice, teaching and service
- Integrity, inquisitiveness, and innovation
- Service to the profession and the community

General Advisement Procedures

Students are admitted based on the match between their area of scholarly interest and that of the faculty. A Major Advisor (MA) is assigned by the DNP Admissions & Progressions Committee based on that match. Changes in MA can be made at the discretion of the student and/or MA and must be approved by the Program Director.

EDSON policy states that e-mail communications between students and faculty should be addressed within two business days following receipt of message. This is to foster prompt communication between advisors and advisees.

Additionally, EDSON policy states that faculty are expected to provide feedback on proposal/manuscript/project drafts, IRB applications, etc. to students within two weeks following receipt of submission, or in other time frames as mutually agreed upon by both the student and their DNP Advisory Committee members.

Major Advisors with 9-month appointments should notify students of vacation plans and develop timelines for communication during the summer months.

The DNP Advisory Committee: Structure and Function

An advisory committee will collectively mentor doctoral students throughout coursework, project development, implementation, and manuscript preparation. The role of the committee is to guide development and critique the students' work in progress. Committees consist of three members: 1 Major Advisor (MA), 1 Associate Advisor (AA), and 1 mentor, configured by the completion of NURS 5895, Topic Identification Seminar. Committee members are chosen by the student collaboratively with the MA. Once the committee is in place it is advisable that they meet at least once each semester; more often as needed to provide guidance for the student. These meetings can be in person, on the web, synchronous or asynchronous, or by phone.

How the committee meets is not as important as conducting regular meetings. Regular meetings of the student and committee can best help assure progression in the doctoral program. The Committee needs to be assembled early in the student's progress and meet regularly to guide the student's works.



A combination of UConn faculty and non-UConn faculty members may be assembled to form the DNP Advisory Committee. Of the three members of the advisory committee, the MA and the AA must be members of the UConn faculty with a Graduate School appointment; only the MA needs to be from the School of Nursing. While it is preferable for the mentor to hold a terminal degree, it is not required; however, the mentor who does NOT hold a terminal degree MUST be a recognized expert (e.g. has published or presented on the topic); further, the advisors do not necessarily have to be nurses. Roles for various committee members follow below. An up-to-date CV is submitted to the DNP program director for approval. Approval must be in place prior to submission of Program of Study, General Exam, and/or DNP Project.

Role of Major Advisor (MA)

The Admissions Committee of the respective doctoral program selects the MA for the student at the time of admission. This determination is made by matching the area of interest indicated on application materials with a faculty member who has expertise in that area. Once admitted, the student must schedule an advising appointment with the MA prior to registering for coursework. This meeting can be in person or with the use of technology, by videoconference, phone or email.

The MA shall be a faculty member of the School of Nursing.

MA's should meet with their student advisees at least once a month, to support student progression, to review the student's DNP Project, and to advise for course registration. These meetings can take place in person, by phone, video technology, or email.

The MA should file Doctoral Advisement notes in the student record at least twice yearly.

Each year in the spring, the MA works with the student to complete end-of-year outcomes report, which should be completed electronically and submitted to the Program Director.

It is recommended that once the student advisement committee is assembled that the committee meet at least twice each semester and more often as needed to best assure the student's progression in the program. Any member of the advisement committee can ask for a meeting however it is often the role of the student and/or the MA to finalize the schedule and make sure a room is available if the meeting is to be face-to-face.

Role of Associate Advisor (AA)

The AA shares the responsibility with the MA of assisting with the development of the student's Plan of Study and doctoral requirements.

The AA's usually have subject matter or methods expertise that brings a complementary perspective to that of the MA and should be selected on that basis.

The student selects AA's in collaboration with the MA and/or the Program Director.

As stated above, the AA must be from the UConn faculty and hold a doctoral degree but does not have to be from the School of Nursing (e.g. they could be faculty of the School of Medicine). DNP graduates are welcome to become AAs; if interested, they will be approved by the Program Director and receive EDSON gratis adjunct faculty status.

Role of the Mentor

The mentor must be a content expert in the field with at least a graduate degree. If the mentor does not hold a doctoral degree, they must be a bona fide expert in the scholarly area, i.e. they will hold a position of authority, and/or have published/presented on the area of scholarly interest. The mentor is affiliated with the site at which the student conducts their DNP Project. They serve as a mentor, champion, and sounding board for the student and the project. Their role is not supervisory. They are not a preceptor. They are a mentor. The mentor-mentee relationship is collegial.

Approval of External Advisors

External faculty who serve as a Major or Associate Advisor must be approved by the graduate school by submitting their CV, and completing the appropriate Kual form.

Responsibilities of Advisors and Mentors

The advisors will participate in reviewing the student's written work. As co-authors on the student's publishable manuscript and poster, they will participate in approving them. They will attend, either remotely or in person, the student's General Exam and Final Defense Presentation. They will be available to meet with the student as needed.

Change of Advisor Procedure

If a student wishes to make a change of MA, AA, or Mentor, the student must notify the DNP Program Director. After consultation, the student will notify the MA, complete a Change of Advisor form, and submit it to the Graduate School. See Resources for form.

DNP Plans of Study

All courses in the Post-MS DNP are delivered in an online format. There are Intensive sessions each semester (spring, summer, and fall) for NURS5895, NURS5869, NURS5879, and NURS5889. Students are expected to attend the Intensive sessions.

Refer to the appropriate DNP Plan of Study (Full-Time or Part-Time) below linked in the Resources section. Students should plan to follow either the full or part-time plan of

study prescribed. (On occasions and in collaboration with the Program Director and MA, students may be permitted to deviate from the prescribed plan of study). BS-DNP students will complete the courses specific to their graduate track (e.g. AGACNP, FNP, NNP, Nurse Leader). Following completion of those courses, they will transition seamlessly into the Post-Master's DNP courses. Students entering the Post-Master's DNP, will take one of the following Plans of Study (Part-Time or Full-Time). [Links to Plans of Study are on last page of this document, under Resources.]

Clinical Clearance Requirements

All DNP students conducting DNP Projects within a healthcare institution must complete healthcare clearance with American Data Bank prior to registering for NURS5869-DNP Residency & Seminar I. Specific requirements and processes are outlined in each student's individual HuskyCT web page. [Link to Compliance Guide for Clinical & Field Students is on the last page of this document, under Resources]

Affiliation Agreements with Healthcare Institutions

All DNP students shall be responsible to identify the institution where they will conduct their DNP Project. An affiliation agreement contract must be in place prior to the start of NURS5869-DNP Residency & Seminar I.

The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education (AACN, 2021)

The Essentials outline ten foundational competencies that are required of all DNP graduates regardless of specialty:

1. Knowledge for Nursing Practice
2. Person-Centered Care
3. Population Health
4. Scholarship for the Nursing Discipline
5. Quality and Safety
6. Interprofessional Partnership
7. Systems-based Practice
8. Informatics and Healthcare Technologies
9. Professionalism
10. Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development

The Scholarly Portfolio

Students will develop a scholarly portfolio, which will include the following:

- At least one manuscript detailing the DNP project, approved by the student's Committee, and submitted to a journal for publication prior to the deadline for degree completion;
- A copy of a poster reflecting the student's DNP Project;
- Participation in a UConn SON research and scholarship conference/meeting;
- Proof of one peer-reviewed poster/podium presentation submitted to a professional conference external to UConn.

The Scholarly Portfolio contents will be approved by the student's advisory committee and contents maintained by the University.

The General Exam

The goal of the General Exam is to evaluate synthesis of core content as noted in the General Exam Criteria. (AACN *Essentials*, 2021).

Topics for the General Exam will be student-specific and consistent with the student's specialty area of practice (e.g., APRNs will select a topic related to their area of specialty will select a topic pertinent to nursing leadership, etc.) The student will demonstrate mastery of the AACN *Essentials*, 2021 in their presentation by addressing the *Essentials* in

the presentation.

The General Exam will include a comprehensive presentation by each student per the most current version of the DNP General Exam criteria. It is best to download forms from the School of Nursing website, to ensure you have the most updated form.

There are three options for the student to choose from for the General Exam:

- A topic different from the student's DNP Project
- A topic similar to the student's DNP Project
- The same topic as the student's DNP Project

The MA must approve the topic of the general exam, with input from the student's DNP Advisory Committee. Evidence of topic approval via e-mail or other means should be placed in the student's file and a copy kept by the MA.

The student independently prepares the presentation, but support and direction are provided in NURS5869. Presentation slides are due to the student's DNP Advisory Committee 4 weeks in advance of the General Exam. The Committee may provide constructive criticism. .

The General Exam is attended only by the student and the student's DNP Advisory Committee – the MA, AA, and mentor. Physical presence is not required, i.e., members of the Committee may participate by phone, or web-based technology.

The General Exam is intended to be held prior to the implementation of the student's DNP Project.

Due to the timing of NURS5869, DNP Residency and Seminar I, the General Exam should, whenever possible, take place in the spring semester. However, if circumstances require the General Exam to be delayed beyond the Spring semester, into the Summer semester, the DNP student shall make sure that their DNP Committee members can be present, in person or electronically, for the General Exam.

A copy of the General Exam grading rubric is available in this link:

The DNP Project

As part of the development of the DNP student's portfolio, the DNP Project is required. The DNP Project is comprised of two major parts required for successful program completion. The first is the actual Project development/implementation/evaluation, which culminates in the production of one manuscript ready for submission to a professional journal. The second part of the DNP Project is a verbal/ poster presentation of the completed Project submitted to a professional association conference and to the internal EDSON Research and Scholarship Day and a report to

the practice agency, if deemed appropriate by the student's DNP Project Committee.

Overall framework: As described by American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2021):

“Doctoral education, whether practice or research, is distinguished by the completion of a specific project that demonstrates synthesis of the student's work and lays the groundwork for future scholarship. For practice doctorates, requiring a dissertation or other original research is contrary to the intent of the DNP. The DNP primarily involves mastery of an advanced specialty within nursing practice. Therefore, other methods must be used to distinguish the achievement of that mastery. Unlike a dissertation, the work may take a number of forms.”

Following the recommendation of AACN, DNP students will assemble a cumulative practice portfolio that includes the impact or outcomes due to practice changes and documents the final practice synthesis and scholarship. Therefore, the student may select one of the following as their final Project format, among others:

- A program development or evaluation
- A quality improvement project
- An evaluation of a new practice model
- Translating evidence into practice
- A health policy project
- Development of an evidence-based practice guideline
- Testing or refining an existing evidence-based practice guideline
- Or, another project, approved by the DNP Project Team Chair

Collaborative (Team) Projects

Collaborative (Team) DNP Projects [done by 2 students working together] are an option. To be feasible, the students working as a team should utilize the guidelines outlined here :

IRB Application Process

PLEASE NOTE: IRB applications may not be submitted until the DNP Project Proposal has been approved by the DNP student's 3-person advisory committee and has undergone a Pre-IRB review, conducted collaboratively by the student's DNP Advisory Committee and the student.

~~Internal~~ external graduate school faculty may serve as Principal Investigator (PI) for the project, provided they can verify the oversight of the work of the student on the project. It is the responsibility of the MA to approve the student's IRB application prior to submission.

Specific procedures for approval signatures are described below:

- DNP Project approval, which is part of the DNP Student Progress Checklist, is maintained in the student's electronic student file with signature of each member
- The student and their committee determine whether the project constitutes human subjects research by going to:
 - <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/humansubjects/hs-decision.htm> (Signature line for each committee member and student)
- If the project involves human subjects research, the committee decides that the student will submit to IRB (signature line for each committee member and student). Upon completion of the Pre-IRB Review:
 - The DNP Project Proposal will be routed to the DNP Director for approval
 - must have approval signatures before submission to IRB (signature line for DNP Director)
 - External IRB – for DNP Projects conducted at facilities external to UConn: If the IRB is external to UConn, the student will facilitate invoking an affiliation between the UConn IRB and the IRB of record.
 - Prior to implementing the DNP Project, the student will send the following items to the DNP Director:
 - The letter of approval from the IRB of record
 - The IRB approved protocol (signature as approved by the DNP Director or Not applicable)
 - The student will forward these documents to UConn's IRB representative, who will reply to the student to affirm the findings of the external IRB. All related documentation will be placed in the student's file.
 - NOTE: Each facility has its own unique IRB forms and processes. It is the student's responsibility to know their facility's processes and inform their Advisory Committee.
- UConn IRB – for DNP Projects conducted with UConn: If the DNP Project is conducted within UConn, then the UConn IRB is utilized for submission. Submission of IRB applications is done electronically through "INFOED" at <https://ovpr.uconn.edu/services/rics/irb-2/irb-forms-templates/>.
- Once the student receives notice from the UConn IRB of exemption/approval, they will forward that and a copy of their proposal to the DNP Program Director
- For DNP Projects that do not require IRB involvement (e.g., health policy DNP Projects, QI/EBP DNP Projects not involving human subjects), the determination that IRB application is not necessary will be made by the DNP Program Director, in collaboration with an Associate Dean and the student's Major Advisor. If this determination is made, documentation of this will be placed in the student's file.

Description of the Manuscript for Publication

The following elements are required to be included in the manuscript, which is based on the DNP Project.

- ☐ Title
- ☐ Abstract
- ☐ Introduction
- ☐ Problem Statement
- ☐ Purpose of the DNP Project
- ☐ The Clinical Question
- ☐ Conceptual and Theoretical Framework
- ☐ Literature Review – The review of the literature should be representative, substantive, and reflect the current state of the science. Sources cited should reflect recent publications wherever possible although allowing for inclusion of recognized classic references.
- ☐ Methodology – Describes the activities that were conducted to achieve. The desired objectives, may include:
 - ☐ Congruent flow from problem (s) and objectives
 - ☐ Clear description of and rationale for selected program activities
 - ☐ Description of sequence of activities with timeline
 - ☐ Description of resources used to complete the project (i.e. staff, equipment, supplies, funding)
 - ☐ Description of participants or setting, as appropriate
 - ☐ Description of how data was gathered and/or how/which outcomes were measured, including test instruments or questionnaires used
 - ☐ How human subjects were protected (if necessary)
 - ☐ How data were analyzed
 - ☐ Budget used (if needed)
 - ☐ Information on evaluation
 - ☐ Present a plan for formative evaluation and modifying methods over the course of the project
 - ☐ Present a plan for summative evaluation to include accomplishment of objectives
 - ☐ Clearly describe evaluation criteria and rationale for selection
- ☐ Results – Describes how the processes were operationalized and the findings that resulted from the intervention
 - ☐ Discussion of findings and comparison to other scholarly work
 - ☐ Conclusions, significance to practice, limitations, recommendations for future study, which may include:
 - ☐ Evaluation of conceptual/theoretical framework
 - ☐ Illustration of how evaluation will be used for program/protocol/other improvement

- o Description of any reports to be produced disseminated
- o Recommendations for follow-up

A link to the guideline for the manuscript is here:

The grading rubrics for the manuscript sections are here:

Note: While this is the standard format for the manuscript, if the journal the student uses requires another format (e.g. AMA, NLA, SQUIRE), the required format will be followed. It is the student's responsibility to make their Committee aware of the author guidelines of their chosen journal.

Dissemination of Findings

- At least one manuscript detailing the DNP project, approved by the student's Committee, and submitted for publication four weeks prior to the student's defense presentation;
- A copy of the poster
- Proof of one peer-reviewed poster/podium presentation submitted to a professional conference external to the EDSON, and to the EDSON Research and Scholarship Day conference A copy of a report to the residency agency on the student's DNP Project, if appropriate.

The DNP Project Timeline

Coursework related to the development of the DNP Project courses begins during semester 1 for all students. The DNP Project topic is identified in NURS5895-DNP Project Topic Identification Seminar, planned, and developed in NURS5869-DNP Residency and Seminar I, implemented in NURS5879-DNP Residency & Seminar II, evaluated in NURS5889-DNP Residency and Seminar III, and disseminated throughout the program, in conjunction with the DNP Residency/Seminar Courses. During this time, students will work closely with their MA's, mentors, and other committee members toward the development of the manuscript.

At the conclusion of each DNP Residency & Seminar course the student will have:

1. DNP Residency & Seminar I, NURS5869:
 - Developed DNP Project Proposal
 - Completed General exam
 - Submit IRB application

2. DNP Residency & Seminar II, NURS5879:

- Implementation of Project as articulated in the DNP Project Proposal

3. DNP Residency & Seminar III, NURS5889:

- At least one manuscript detailing the DNP project, approved by the student's Committee, and submitted for publication to a scholarly journal. All members of the student's DNP Advisory Committee are included as co-authors on the manuscript;
- A copy of a poster reflecting the student's DNP Project. All members of the student's DNP Advisory Committee are to be included as co-authors on the poster;
- Participation in the EDSON Research and Scholarship Day
- Proof of one peer-reviewed poster/podium presentation submitted to a professional conference external to UConn; and,
- A copy of a report to the residency agency on the student's DNP Project, if appropriate.

Note: Students may progress into subsequent Residency and Seminar courses while completing deliverables from previous Residency and Seminar courses.

At the conclusion of the final semester, each student will have:

- Completed Project Evaluation
- Completed Project Dissemination
- Completed Portfolio Components (DNP Committee-approved manuscript submitted for publication to a scholarly journal, Poster, & Report of findings to faculty & practice agency, if applicable)
- Completed presentation at a UConn SON research conference/meeting
- Complete final presentation to faculty
- Obtained signed "Final Examination Form" and returned to DNP Program Coordinator and filed with the Graduate School.
- Complete all clinical hours.

Final Presentation to the Faculty (also referred to as the "defense")

Upon completion of the DNP Project, the student shall develop a final presentation to the faculty. The presentation slides will be provided by the student to their committee members 4 weeks in advance of the presentation date. Constructive critique, input, and feedback are permitted by the Committee members for the student.

This presentation is a public event; faculty, family, and colleagues are invited. The event is streamed on electronic media. The presentation will be 30 minutes in length. The presentation will include the following:

- Description of the problem
- Purpose of the DNP Project
- Theoretical framework used in the DNP Project
- Review of the literature
- Description of methods used in the DNP Project
- Results of the Intervention
- Conclusions
 - Discussion of significance to practice
 - Limitations of the DNP Project
- Recommendations for future projects
- Application of the DNP Project to all 8 of AACN's DNP Essentials
- Application of the DNP Project to the roles of the DNP-prepared nurse

Following the student's 30-to-40-minute presentation, there will be up to 15 minutes allotted for questions and comments from the audience. Following the question and answer period, the student and audience will be excused and the student's DNP Committee will deliberate and render their decision, which will be immediately provided to the student.

Reporting Results of the Final Exam to the Registrar:

The student will initiate the reporting process after the final presentation using the following process:

- Complete the Report on Final Examination form on the UConn Registrar's Office website:
<https://uconn.kualibuild.com/app/builder/app/62e7cb71bcf99bfca272d293/run>

Completion of Graduation Requirements

Following successful completion of the Final Presentation to the Faculty, the "Report on the Final Exam" will be submitted to the Office of the Registrar by the Program Coordinator on behalf of the student.

All the following must be completed in order to meet graduation requirements:

- Report of the Final Exam form delivered to the Graduate School
- At least one manuscript detailing the DNP project, approved by the student's Committee, and submitted to a journal for publication prior to the deadline for degree completion
- Poster based on the DNP Project
 - Presented at the EDSON Research and Scholarship Day
- Abstract submitted to outside, peer-reviewed professional conference
- Report on the Project delivered to the Residency agency, if appropriate.

Resources

Academic Calendar: <https://registrar.uconn.edu/academic-calendar/>

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) - DNP Essentials:
<https://www.aacnnursing.org/DNP/DNP-Essentials>

Change of Major Advisor Form: <https://registrar.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1604/2017/08/Change-of-Major-Advisor.pdf>

Compliance Guide for Clinical & Field Students:
<https://ocpc.office.uconn.edu/information-for-students/>

Final Defense Grading Rubric: <https://dnp.nursing.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2463/2021/12/DNP-Final-Defense-Presentation-Grading-Rubric-2020-2021.pdf>

General Exam Grading Rubric: <https://dnp.nursing.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2463/2021/12/DNP-General-Exam-Grading-Rubric.pdf>

Graduate School-Change in Plan of Study Form: <https://registrar.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1604/2017/11/Request-Change-Plan-of-Study.pdf>

Graduate School Plan of Study Form: <https://registrar.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1604/2017/11/Plan-of-Study-Doctor-Nursing-Practice.pdf>

Plan of Study-Post-MS DNP Part Time: <https://dnp.nursing.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2463/2021/12/Plan-of-Study-for-PM-DNP-Program-Part-Time.pdf>

Plan of Study-Post-MS DNP Full Time: <https://dnp.nursing.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2463/2021/12/Plan-of-Study-for-the-Post-Masters-DNP-Program.pdf>

Report on the General Exam: <https://registrar.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1604/2018/02/Report-on-General-Exam-Doctoral.pdf>

School of Nursing Policies

SON specific policies may be found at [School of Nursing Policies | School of Nursing \(uconn.edu\)](#) and include:

- SON Appeal of Assigned Course Grade
- SON Cell Phone Use Policy
- SON Clinical Practicum & Residency Course Policy
- SON Compliance with Agency
- SON Dress Code Policy
- SON Exam Taking Policy
- SON Laptop Requirement Policy
- SON Medication Math Competency Policy
- SON Missed or late coursework Policy
- SON Missed Exam Policy
- SON Religious Observation Conflict Policy
- SON Social Media Policy
- SON Requirement for Clinical Practicum Courses

UConn School of Nursing – DNP Program:

<https://dnp.nursing.uconn.edu/>