

University of Connecticut Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing

DNP Program

Collaborative (team) DNP Project Guidelines

Purpose: The purpose of these guidelines is to provide structure, process and expectations for DNP student final projects for students who want to work and collaborate in groups. The American Colleges of Nursing (AACN) recommends group or team projects as an option for meeting the final scholarly project requirement in DNP programs. It is recognized that such projects prepare students to work within teams, including interprofessional teams, which is one of the competencies of DNP graduates. Students need to be clear about any conflicts of interest including reporting relationships and how these will be managed by another organizational leader (e.g., if one student is the work supervisor of another student, both must report to a separate mutually negotiated clinical leader who will be responsible for the overall project oversight; and both will provide in writing what each student will be responsible for completing).

General Guidelines

1. Each student will collaboratively participate in 100% of the proposal development, project implementation, and evaluation and analysis of results.
2. Each student will independently complete the DNP General Examination, with the oral examination with their committee.
3. All students will generate a written plan on how they will work together and what each person's unique responsibilities will be as part of the implementation plans or protocol for the collaborative project. Students must choose one of the following options:
 - **Option #A:** Each student will implement the same protocol for the same project but in separate settings, for example, student A is responsible for setting X and student B is responsible for setting Y.
 - **Option #B:** Each student will implement the protocol together at the same setting, but each individual student will lead specific portions of the project.
4. All students will work together to discuss data analysis plans, then each student will participate in the data analysis and write up his/her results involving their project component.
5. For the final project examination, each student will complete:
 - A public presentation: students are encouraged to present jointly with each student presenting their unique contributions and targeted activities.
6. Students may have the same advisor or different advisors who will work together to assure each student completes their project successfully.
7. Committee members may be the same, but they do not have to be. Students may wish to choose the practice expert(s)/mentor(s) in their setting.
8. Each of the students and advisors are required to meet at least once at time of proposal development and again before the final project examination to provide

standardization of expectations, improve communication and promote collaboration.

Procedures and Expectations

1. Planning Phase

- Students can together identify the practice inquiry, problem or gap.
- Students may work together to identify population-intervention-outcome-(time) PIO(t) questions and then are expected to each conduct individual search, appraise and synthesize the evidence or literature. Students can compare their evidence and write up.
- Students are expected to work collaboratively and promote scholarly activity by providing critical and constructive feedback on each other's work, this may include synthesis of evidence, tables, and analysis.
- Students together make plans about the evidence-based interventions that can help address the practice gap and clearly delineate activities per students. This should be written in the proposal and General Exam and a written collaboration plan/contract
- Students decide how they will together implement the recommendations (e.g., share implementation in one area, divide responsibilities, or each implement in different settings) and each develops a written implementation and evaluation plan, and presents (individually or together) to their teams and key stakeholders.
- Students individually complete their professional examinations with the content from above. Evaluation of the student follows the same rubrics and criteria as individual projects.

2. Implementation Phase

- Each student is responsible for the project management for their part of the project, or entire project if replicating at a different site. It will be important for advisors and students to communicate on the individual project responsibilities. This includes:
 - Team leadership
 - Baseline data collection
 - Preparing patients, staff, clinicians and materials (as appropriate)
 - Using select strategies to implement and promote adoption of the practice change
 - Conducting process measures such as audits along the way
 - Providing project progress reports at planned timepoints to setting leaders, and to their project partner(s). This can be done together as well.
 - Communicating with project partner(s) and setting leaders and staff about any changes or departures from the plan
- **Evaluation Phase**

- Each student is responsible for collecting their shared part of the post-implementation data
- Each student is responsible for communicating outcomes with the key stakeholders and setting staff. This includes local presentations to staff and leaders, which can be done together.
- Each student is responsible for analyzing the data for their parts of the project
- Each student will individually complete his/her written summary (with advisor assistance as usual), final documents, and their oral defense with their committee.
 - A public forum is required, and students can choose to do this together and may have 30-40 minutes for their joint presentation, as is consistent with the traditional final DNP presentation.
- Students are responsible for negotiating manuscript and conference poster presentation preparation and authorship order, including advisor(s). It is expected that all advisors/team members are co-authors on the poster.
- All students in the group are assumed to be invited in all manuscripts unless otherwise negotiated. Authorship order should also be included in the negotiations.
- A manuscript is required from the final project that will be submitted to a nursing or healthcare-related journal. It is expected that all advisors/team members are co-authors on the poster and manuscript.

References:

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2015). The doctor of nursing practice: Current issues and clarifying recommendations. Report from the task force on the implementation of the DNP.
<http://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/DNP/DNP-Implementation.pdf?ver=2017-08-01-105830-517>.
- Millner, K. A., & DeNisco, S. (2017). Innovatively operationalizing a Doctor of Nursing Practice group or team project. *Journal of Nursing Education, (58)10, 615-616*.