SON OP 40.450: Distribution of Course Credit Hours in Courses with a Clinical Component

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Distribution of Course Credit Hours in Courses with a Clinical Component policy is to set course credit hour interpretations on a standard basis for degree requirements and a realistic basis for clinical and practitioner requirements.

REVIEW: All policies in the Graduate Program Manual shall be reviewed by the Graduate Program Associate Dean/Department Chairs by December 1 of even-numbered years in collaboration with the Graduate Program Council. Final approval of the Graduate Program Manual is by the Dean.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

1.0 Policy

The curriculum pattern and resulting course content and clinical hours allotment reflect an intentional and progressive plan that includes classroom and clinical hours where applicable.

Clinical hours are measured as follows:

- MSN Education and MSN Informatics: 1:3
- MSN Nursing Administration and MSN/MBA: 1:4
- MSN Advanced Practice Registered Nurse: 1:3.5
- Post Master’s Doctor of Nursing Practice: 1:6

For the BSN-DNP Program, the ratio of semester credit hours to clinical course hours for the purpose of credit determination is:

1:4 for direct care

**Direct** care is defined as “nursing care provided to individuals or families that is intended to achieve specific health goals or achieve selected health outcomes.” Direct care may be provided in a wide range of settings, including acute and critical care, long-term care, home health community-based settings, and educational settings” (AACN, The DNP: Current Issues and Clarifying Recommendations, Glossary, p. 11, August, 2015). **Direct** clinical care is provided to individuals, families and populations in population-focused areas of NP practice (NONPF, Clinical Education Issues in Preparing Nurse Practitioner Students for Independent Practice: An Ongoing Series of Papers, p. 9, 2010.)

1:6 for non-direct care

**Non-direct** care is defined as experiences that allow students to “a) engage in activities to advance individual development related to the DNP Essentials and b) develop and implement the DNP Project” (SON OP 40.700). **Non-direct** experiences may include, but are not limited to, “observational experiences; interviews; participation in community events or local, state and national meetings relevant to the learning objectives; activities related to developing, implementing and completing the DNP Project; or other unique learning opportunities from which the student can achieve defined learning objectives” (SON OP 40.711). According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2015), “practice experiences for the DNP
student are not intended to be solely direct patient care focused but should include indirect care practices in healthcare settings or related environments that broaden the experiences of the student. Faculty should consider placing students in nontraditional practice settings to acquire the expanded skill sets defined in the DNP Essentials (p. 8 from The Doctor of Nursing Practice: Current Issues and Clarifying Recommendations, http://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/DNP/DNP-Implementation.pdf).

Following are examples of the allocation of didactic and clinical hours for courses with a clinical component:

- In an academic term, for a 3-credit hour course in the MSN Nursing Education track, 1 hour per week may be dedicated to didactic with the remaining 2 semester-credit-hours assigned to the clinical component requiring the student to complete 6 (2 semester-credit-hours x 3) clinical hours per week during the semester.
- In an academic term, for a 3-credit hour course in the PM DNP Program, 1 hour per week may be dedicated to didactic with the remaining 2 semester-credit-hours assigned to the clinical component requiring the student to complete 12 (2 semester-credit-hours x 6) clinical hours per week during the semester.

**Semester Length for Clinical Hour Calculations**

For the purposes of clinical hour calculations, the MSN and BSN to DNP Programs are based on a 15-week semester with the option of acquiring additional hours through banking of hours for the summer semester with prior approval by faculty.

For the purposes of clinical hours calculations, the Post-Master’s DNP Program is based on a 16-week semester, which facilitates ongoing work on the DNP Project and allows students to take advantage of non-direct care experiential opportunities that do not occur within the defined semester dates. To gain approval for clinical hours that fall outside the published semester dates, Post-master’s DNP students must follow the guidelines contained in the document entitled DNP Courses with Clinical Hour Requirements, Guidelines, and Resources, housed in Grad Central under DNP Student Resources: https://nursing.ttuhsc.edu/gradcentral/files/dnp/clinical.pdf/