Post-Master’s Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Clinical/Practice Hours and Gap Analysis

PURPOSE: The purpose of the DNP Post Masters’ Clinical/Practice Hours and Gap Analysis policy is to detail the process for evaluating and ensuring the completion of the number of clinical hours and other requirements required for DNP graduates as established by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education (2021).

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 DNP faculty members recognize that post-master’s students come from a wide variety of programs and with a wide variety of advanced experiences from clinical practice, health system administration, public health, academia, industry, and the health policy arena. This wide variety of experiences and practice arenas adds a tremendously enriching dynamic to students’ educational journey in the DNP program. With this diversity, it is also important to ensure all students come into the program with a common set of competencies and clinical/practice hour requirements.

This policy was established for two purposes: a) to ensure all students meet the minimum 1000 clinical hours required for DNP graduates as established by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s (AACN) The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education r (2020) through an individualized approach that recognizes each student’s advanced experience and expertise upon entry into the DNP program; and b) to ensure that each student has the necessary competencies at the master’s level to be successful in the DNP program.

Each student will achieve a minimum of 500 clinical/practice hours in the TTUHSC DNP program. The additional 500 clinical/practice hours (for students who did not have 500 hours in their MSN program) is documented from a portfolio review upon entry into the DNP program and a plan is developed to achieve any additional hours required. The portfolio may include a resume or CV, a written description of the individual’s practice experience(s), participation in academic and specialized programs in the student’s specialty area, national certification in a specialty area, and/or additional activities and experiences that exemplify expert practice in nursing and leadership across a range of practice domains. The clinical/practice hours accepted to meet the 500-hour requirement must be outside of the individual’s normal scope of paid employment.

A gap analysis is conducted for students with a master’s degree in a field other than nursing to determine how the student has achieved competencies detailed in AACN’s The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education (2021) through a combination of academic work coursework and nursing experience. An action plan is developed based on the gap analysis to ensure the student has the necessary competencies to be successful in the DNP program.
2.0 Procedure

1. The DNP post-master’s program requires students to complete a minimum of 500 clinical hours throughout the curriculum. A portion of the 500 required hours is designated clinical/practice hour requirements for specific DNP courses to meet course objectives. “Self-designed” clinical/practice hours are included within N6244 Advanced Practice Development and N7350 DNP Project and Practicum to allow students to a) engage in activities to advance individual development related to the The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education (2021) and b) develop and implement the DNP Project.

2. Students are allowed to accrue up to 50% of clinical/practice hours for any DNP course with a clinical/practice hour requirement prior to enrollment in the course. Accrued clinical/practice hours must meet the following criteria:
   a) Hours related to Project development and implementation must be approved by the DNP Project Advisor;
   b) Hours related to objectives in a specific course must be approved by the course faculty;
   c) Hours are approved by the course faculty prior to enrollment in the course and,
   d) Hours are documented in the DNP Clinical e-Log.

3. To meet the total 1000-hour requirement for a DNP graduate with the combination of master’s clinical/practice hours and the 500 clinical/practice hours required in the DNP program, individualized determinants are utilized to identify the number of clinical hours that students need for graduation as follows:
   a) Qualified Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) applicants with national certification as an APRN are expected to have had a minimum of 500 clinical hours in their APRN master’s program in order to meet requirements for APRN recognition and national certification, as appropriate for their professional role and practice area. The DNP post-master’s program provides a minimum of 500 clinical hours resulting in a minimum total of 1000 clinical hours for graduation with the DNP degree.
   b) Qualified applicants who hold a master of science in nursing (MSN) in administration, education, or other area are expected to have had some clinical hours in their master's program. Clinical hours completed in the MSN program will be verified through a transcript review and school catalog verification, and/or verification of hours in writing from the MSN program. If the number of clinical/practice hours from the MSN program is less than 500, opportunities to achieve the required number of clinical/practice hours are offered via one or more of the following methods:
      i. Submission of a portfolio that documents professional activities and scholarship to meet the criteria for clinical hours for the DNP program. The portfolio may include a resume or CV, a written description of the individual’s professional experience outside of paid employment, academic and specialized programs of study in the student’s specialty area, national certification in administration or specialty area that requires a master’s degree to sit for certification, and/or additional activities and experiences that exemplify expert practice in nursing and leadership across a range of practice domains. Three hundred (300) clinical/practice hours will be awarded for national certification that requires a master’s degree to sit for certification.
      ii. The maximum number of clinical/practice hours that will be awarded through the portfolio review is 500.
      iii. Students who do not meet the clinical/practice hour criteria through a portfolio review will be evaluated and either required to take a master’s level nursing course or an independent study designed to provide an individualized clinical intensive based on
their background, experience and learning needs to complete the required 1000 clinical hours for the DNP degree.

4. Qualified applicants with a master’s degree in a field other than nursing are evaluated for the clinical hour requirement through the process described in 2.1.b. An individualized plan is developed to meet the required clinical hours for the DNP graduate. Additionally, a gap analysis is conducted for these students to determine how each student has achieved competencies as detailed in AACN’s *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* (2021) through a combination of academic course work as identified in official transcripts and nursing experience as reviewed in the students resume/CV. An action plan is developed based on the gap analysis to ensure the student has the necessary competencies to be successful in the DNP program.

5. The Post-Master’s DNP Program Director is responsible for conducting the clinical/practice hour reviews and gap analysis, approving appropriate clinical/practice hours as described herein, and determining any additional academic requirements indicated by the clinical/practice hour review and gap analysis. The *Gap Analysis and Approved Clinical/Practice Hours Summary* (Attachment A) is completed for each student who is not a graduate of an APRN master’s program.

6. The DNP Council is responsible for providing clinical/practice hour(s) suggestions and assisting the Post-Master’s DNP Program Director in evaluating the outcomes related to the gap analysis process.
Attachment A
Doctor of Nursing Practice Program
Gap Analysis* and Approved Clinical/Practice Hours Summary**

Student:

Date:

Clinical Hours Approved through Portfolio Review:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
<th>Hours Approved</th>
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<tbody>
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**TOTAL:** 500

Gap Analysis Summary:

Action Plan:

Approved by (Post-Master’s DNP Program Director):

* For students with a master’s degree in a field other than nursing, a gap analysis is conducted to determine how the student has achieved competencies detailed in AACN’s *The Essentials of Master’s Education in Nursing* (2012) through a combination of academic course work and nursing experience. An action plan is developed based on the gap analysis to ensure the student has the necessary competencies to be successful in the DNP program.

**To ensure students meet the required minimum 1000 clinical hours required for DNP Graduates as established by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s *Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* (2006), students with a Master’s degree in a field in which they did not achieve 500 clinical/practice hours must have a portfolio review to determine an action plan for achieving the required clinical/practice hours as a DNP Graduate. Each student will achieve a minimum of 500 clinical/practice hours in the DNP program. The additional 500 clinical/practice hours (for students who do not have 500+ hours in their MSN program) is documented from a portfolio review upon entry into the DNP program and a plan is developed to achieve any additional hours required. The portfolio may include a resume or CV, written description of the individual’s practice experience, participation in academic and specialized programs in the student’s specialty area, national certification in a specialty area, and/or additional activities and experiences that exemplify expert practice in nursing and leadership across a range of domains of practice. The clinical/practice hours accepted to meet the 500 hour requirement must be outside of the individual’s normal scope of paid employment.