



Origination 12/2/2011
Effective 11/1/2023
Last Revised 11/1/2023
Next Review 10/31/2024

Owner Laura Massa:
Interim Assoc VC
Ac&Fac Prgms
Area Academic and
Student Affairs
Codes EO 1067

Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree Programs

I. Policy

This policy establishes minimum requirements, policies, and procedures that shall apply to all Doctor of Nursing Practice degree programs offered solely by the California State University (CSU). This policy does not address requirements of Doctor of Nursing Practice programs offered jointly with institutions outside of the California State University. Campuses may establish policies in addition to those stated herein.

A. Authorization

In accordance with Education Code Sections 66600, 66040, 89030, 89035, 89280 and 89281, and Title 5 of the *California Code of Regulations* Section 40050.2, the California State University is authorized to award the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree. Enrollments in the Doctor of Nursing Practice programs shall not alter the California State University's ratio of graduate instruction to total enrollment, and shall not diminish enrollment growth in university undergraduate programs.

B. Admission and Standing

1. Each campus offering a program leading to a DNP degree shall establish admission requirements that at minimum meet the requirements established in Title 5 of the *California Code of Regulations*, Section 41021. Admission shall be granted on a competitive basis; meeting the minimum requirements qualifies an individual for but does not guarantee admission to the program. Requirements for admission shall apply to all DNP applicants and shall include, at minimum, the following:
 - a. The applicant holds an acceptable bachelor's degree in nursing or master's degree in nursing earned at an institution accredited by a regional accrediting association and a national professional accrediting association, as applicable. The applicant has completed equivalent academic preparation as determined by the appropriate

campus authority.

- b. The applicant has attained a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 in an acceptable bachelor's degree in nursing or master's degree in nursing as determined by the appropriate campus authority.
 - c. The applicant maintains an active, unrestricted, licensure to practice as a registered nurse with no disciplinary action pending or imposed in the state in which practicum experiences will be completed.
 - d. The applicant meets all requirements for credentialing or certification eligibility as appropriate to the nursing specialty area.
 - e. The applicant has demonstrated sufficient preparation and experience pertinent to nursing practice to be successful in doctoral education.
 - f. Evidence considered in the admission process shall include but not be limited to:
 - i. letters of recommendation from professional persons knowledgeable about the applicant's nursing practice experience and the applicant's potential for scholarship and leadership.
 - ii. a written statement of purpose reflecting what the applicant expects to accomplish in the DNP program and how the DNP program will advance the applicant's nursing career and practice.
 - g. A personal interview may be required prior to admission.
 - h. The applicant shall meet any additional requirements established by the chancellor in consultation with faculty and any additional requirements prescribed by the appropriate campus authority.
2. **Classified Standing**
Per Title 5 Section 41011, an applicant who has met all admission criteria and who has been recommended by the program for admission shall be placed in classified graduate standing.
 3. **Admission by Special Action** Per Title 5 Section 41001, an applicant who does not qualify for admission under the provisions of Section B 1 of this policy may be admitted by special action if on the basis of acceptable evidence the applicant is judged by the appropriate campus authority to possess sufficient academic and professional potential.
 4. **Admission with Conditionally Classified Graduate Standing** Per Title 5 Section 41010, an applicant who under the provisions in Section B.1 is ineligible for admission because of deficiencies in prerequisite preparation may be admitted with conditionally classified graduate standing if, in the opinion of the program faculty, the deficiencies may be rectified by specified additional preparation, including examinations. The student shall be granted classified graduate standing upon rectification of the deficiencies and upon fulfillment of any other requirements as specified by the appropriate campus authority.

C. Curricula

1. Programs shall be consistent with the requirements of a professional nursing accrediting body and the regional accrediting association.
2. DNP curricula may be organized as cohort-based programs and shall include learning

experiences that balance research, theory, and practice.

3. Student work in support of the doctoral project shall be embedded throughout the DNP program curriculum.
4. The core curriculum for each DNP program shall provide professional preparation in advanced nursing practice, including but not be limited to theory, application and evaluation of research findings, curriculum development and evaluation, professional practice, management and leadership, and essential curricular concepts for advanced nursing at the doctoral level, as identified in Attachment A.

D. Degree Requirements

1. Program of Study

To be eligible for the DNP degree, the candidate shall have completed a program of study, including a qualifying assessment and a doctoral project that is both consistent with Title 5 Section 40513 and is approved by the appropriate campus authority. Requirements for the qualifying assessment and doctoral project are specified, respectively, in Section E and H.3 of this policy. Each campus shall establish policies and procedures for creating and amending a student's doctoral study plan and shall disseminate those policies and procedures in a DNP program student handbook or manual, pursuant to Section J. 3.

2. Unit Requirements

- a. The pattern of study for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing-to-Doctor of Nursing Practice program shall include at least 27 semester units in courses organized primarily for doctoral students and the remaining units required for the degree shall be in courses organized for specialty advanced nursing coursework as identified by national nursing specialty certification agencies. No more than 12 semester doctoral project units shall be allowed toward the degree program requirements.
- b. The pattern of study for the Doctor of Nursing Practice post-master's degree program shall be composed of at least 36 semester units earned in graduate standing. At least 27 semester units required for the degree shall be in courses organized primarily for doctoral students, and the remaining units required for the degree shall be in courses organized primarily for doctoral students or courses organized primarily for master's and doctoral students. No more than 12 semester doctoral project units shall be allowed toward the degree program requirements.

3. Academic Residence

At least 80 percent of earned required Doctor of Nursing Practice program units shall be completed in residence at the campus awarding the degree or campuses jointly awarding the degree. The appropriate campus authority may authorize the substitution of credit earned by alternate means for part of this residence requirement. The campus may establish a policy allowing the transfer of relevant courses and credits completed as a matriculated student in another graduate program, on the condition that the other program is appropriately accredited.

4. *Transfer of Units*

The DNP program shall establish a policy allowing transfer of units earned in relevant graduate courses. At a minimum the policy shall require that the student completed courses in an accredited post baccalaureate nursing program.

5. *Petitions for Variance in Academic Requirements*

Each DNP degree program shall establish and implement policies regarding student petitions for variance in academic requirements. Student handbooks or manuals shall specify policies and procedures by which a student may petition for a variance in academic requirements.

E. DNP Qualifying Assessment

1. DNP degree programs shall require that students successfully complete a rigorous qualifying assessment of the student's knowledge. The qualifying assessment may be written, oral, or both.
2. **Requirements of the DNP Qualifying Assessment**
 - a. In order to continue in the program students shall be required to pass the qualifying assessment within two attempts.
 - b. **Content**
Members of the DNP program faculty shall determine the content and timing of the qualifying assessment.
 - c. **Timing**
 1. The student shall be required to pass the qualifying assessment prior to advancement to candidacy.
 2. The qualifying assessment shall be administered at a time in the program sequence when the student's mastery of essential elements of the core advanced nursing practice concepts may be fairly evaluated and when the student is considered ready to begin the doctoral project.
 - d. **Function of the Qualifying Assessment Team**
A qualifying assessment team shall evaluate student performance in the assessment process. Agreement of the qualifying assessment team is required for the candidate to pass the qualifying assessment.
 - e. **Membership of the Qualifying Assessment Team**
The qualifying assessment team shall have a minimum of three members, including the Director of the DNP program or designee. The qualifying assessment team leader shall be a tenured or tenure-track member of the nursing program faculty. The team membership may include someone who holds an appropriate professional, rather than faculty, position.

F. Doctoral Project Proposal Assessment

A student shall submit a doctoral project proposal to the doctoral project team (also referred to as a qualifying assessment team) for approval, following the procedures and format established by the DNP program faculty and the campus.

1. Doctoral Project Proposal Requirements

The doctoral project proposal shall contain, at a minimum, a description of the problem, a review of the relevant literature, a statement of the project purpose, a description of the project methodology, and a statement of consideration of human subjects rights as appropriate.

2. Institutional Review Board Approval Requirements

Based on campus guidelines, appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval shall be obtained. Failure to obtain required IRB approval prior to collection of data on human subjects may disqualify a student from further use of those data. The doctoral project team leader shall advise the student regarding human subjects review requirements and regarding compliance with IRB regulations.

3. Doctoral Project Proposal Team

The team shall be made up of a team leader who is either tenured or tenure-track nursing faculty, shall include at least one additional doctorally prepared nursing faculty member, and may include one member who holds an appropriate professional position. The campus program director may approve an exception to membership criteria, including the addition of a doctorally prepared nursing faculty from another CSU campus as a team member or team leader. The programs college or graduate dean may also provide consultation regarding exceptions.

4. Decision Regarding the Doctoral Project Proposal

The doctoral project proposal team shall communicate formally its decision in writing to the student, indicating "approval," "approval with modifications," or "lack of approval." In order for the student to proceed with the formal conduct of the doctoral project, the student shall have received written approval of the proposal by the doctoral project proposal team and, if applicable, written Institutional Review Board notification that human subjects review requirements have been met.

5. Resubmission of a Doctoral Project Proposal

If the doctoral project proposal team decision is "approval with modifications" or "lack of approval," the team leader shall communicate to the student in writing the process and expectations for resubmission. The team shall review the revised and resubmitted proposal and communicate to the student in writing the team's decision.

G. Advancement to Candidacy

For advancement to candidacy for the DNP degree, the student shall have achieved classified graduate standing and met such particular requirements as the chancellor and the appropriate campus authority may prescribe. The requirements shall include a qualifying assessment.

H. Doctoral Project Defense and Dissemination

1. Doctoral Project Team

The doctoral project team shall provide guidance and supervision for development, completion, and approval of the project.

2. Membership of the Doctoral Project Team

The team shall be made up of a team leader who is tenured or tenure-track nursing faculty, shall include at least one additional doctorally prepared nursing faculty member, and may include one member who holds an appropriate professional position. The campus program director may approve an exception to membership criteria, including the addition of a doctorally prepared nursing faculty from another CSU campus as a team member or leader.

a. **Doctoral Project Team Leader**

The doctoral project team leader shall provide primary supervision for doctoral project. The team leader shall be a tenured or tenure-track CSU nursing faculty member approved by the appropriate campus authority.

b. **Appointment of Doctoral Project Team**

The team members shall be appointed by the appropriate doctoral program authority (e.g., program director). The DNP program director may allow the replacement of a team member, based on the evaluation of a rationale provided by the student or team member making the request.

3. Doctoral Project Requirements

- a. The doctoral project shall be the written product of a systematic, rigorous evidence-based endeavor focused on a significant nursing practice issue. It shall evidence originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and adequate rationale. The doctoral project shall reflect a command of scholarly literature and shall demonstrate the student's mastery of evidence-based practice at the doctoral level. Focused on the use of evidence to improve professional practice, policy and or patient outcomes, the doctoral project format shall be approved by the doctoral project team.

In accordance with Section 40513 of Title 5 of the *California Code of Regulations*, CSU DNP programs shall require the completion of a doctoral project conforming to the following minimum criteria: The doctoral project shall identify the problem statement and purpose, state the major theoretical perspectives, explain the significance of the undertaking, relate it to the relevant scholarly and professional literature, set forth the appropriate sources for and

methods of gathering and analyzing the data, and offer a conclusion or recommendation. It shall include a written abstract that summarizes the significance of the work, objectives, methodology, and a conclusion or recommendation.

- b. An oral presentation of the doctoral project shall be the final process for the acceptance of the candidate's doctoral project.

4. Final Approval of the Oral Presentation and the Written Doctoral Project

The final examination shall consist of an oral presentation and submission of the written doctoral project, evaluated by the doctoral project team. Approval of the doctoral project and recommendation that the DNP degree be conferred shall require agreement of the doctoral project team. In the event that the team requires substantive changes to the doctoral project, the final vote of the team will be postponed until the changes are completed.

5. Submission of the Approved Doctoral Project

The student shall be required, after successful completion of the final oral presentation and its approval, to submit the approved written doctoral project to the appropriate campus entity in conformity with campus policy and formatting requirements. For the degree to be conferred in a particular term, the doctoral project shall be submitted by the deadline specified by the program and campus.

1. Satisfactory Progress, Probation, and Disqualification

1. Requirement for Satisfactory Progress

Each DNP student shall be required to maintain satisfactory progress toward degree requirements. The student shall be expected to complete satisfactorily all courses and examinations and shall be expected to advance to candidacy within the time frame specified by the DNP program faculty.

2. Criteria for Satisfactory Progress

In accordance with campus policy, the DNP program faculty and the campus shall establish criteria for satisfactory progress in the program. The criteria shall include, at a minimum, the following:

- a. the student shall maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average in courses taken to satisfy the requirements for the degree; and
- b. a course in which no letter grade is assigned shall not be used in computing grade point average.

3. Time to Degree

- a. The student shall have completed all requirements for the degree within five years following matriculation to the doctoral program. The appropriate campus authority, consistent with campus policy, may extend by up to two years the time allowed for completion of the

requirements under the following circumstances:

1. the student is in good standing;
 2. the extension is warranted by compelling individual circumstances; and
 3. the student demonstrates current knowledge of research and advanced practice nursing, as required by the campus.
- b. The DNP program faculty shall establish, in conformity with campus policy, criteria for granting further extension under special circumstances. The criteria shall include, at a minimum:
1. the student is in good standing;
 2. the extension is warranted by compelling individual circumstances; and
 3. the student demonstrates current knowledge of research and advanced practice nursing, as required by the campus.
- c. At the conclusion of each term of enrollment during an extension exception, the DNP program faculty shall determine whether the student has made satisfactory progress.

4. Credit/No Credit

The DNP program shall establish a policy regarding credit/no credit in graduate work conducted toward satisfaction of degree requirements.

5. Probation

A student who falls below a 3.0 grade point average in any one term shall be placed on academic probation and notified of this placement in writing.

6. Disqualification

A student who fails to make satisfactory progress may be officially disqualified from the program based on the recommendation of the DNP program faculty, in accordance with policies and procedures established by the campus.

- a. A student may be disqualified only after a thorough review of the case, including appropriate consultation and submission of a written recommendation by the DNP program faculty. The student shall be notified in writing of the disqualification. The student shall have the opportunity to appeal the decision.
- b. A student who has been disqualified from the DNP program shall not be allowed to enroll in doctoral-level courses in the program concentration or otherwise continue in the DNP program. A statement shall appear in the university catalog or DNP Program Handbook indicating that a disqualification is either final with no opportunity for an appeal for re-admission to the concentration or indicating if the individual may be allowed to submit a formal re-application to be considered for readmission to a different degree program concentration.

J. Doctoral Advising and Mentoring

1. Expectations

Academic advising and professional mentoring shall be arranged by the DNP program and conducted by campus faculty and staff members to address:

- a. promoting a well-planned and efficient DNP course of study that can be completed within three years by a professional nurse;
- b. guidance and information that foster academic and professional development;
- c. assisting students to apply what is learned in coursework toward improving nursing practice, nursing education, and client outcomes;
- d. advocacy on behalf of students and their academic needs; and
- e. creating a doctoral culture typified by:
 - i. scholarly discussion and dialogue that foster critical inquiry and clinical reasoning;
 - ii. expert supervision of DNP candidates in the conduct of a doctoral project; and
 - iii. fostering informal assessment and feedback designed to enhance student reflection on their doctoral role in nursing practice.

2. Advising and Mentoring Policies

Each campus offering a DNP degree program shall establish and implement advising and mentoring policies designed to enhance the academic and professional development of students in the program. Policies shall address but are not limited to objectives of advising, roles of faculty and staff advisors, assignment of faculty and staff advisors, and advising responsibilities of doctoral project team leaders.

3. DNP Student Handbook

Each program shall make available to enrolled students a graduate student handbook. In addition to information and policies specific to the program, the handbook shall expressly advise program participants that they are also governed by the campus catalog, which includes policies and other information applicable to all CSU students.

II. References

Keywords: dnp, executive order 1067

III. Authority

This policy is issued pursuant to Sections 66600, 89030, 89030.1, 89035, and 89280 through 89284 of the California Education Code, Sections 40050, 40100.1, 40513, 40514 and 41021 of Title 5 of the *California Code of Regulations*, and [Section II of the Standing Orders of the Board of Trustees of the California State University](#), as further delegated by the [Standing Delegations of Administrative](#)

Authority. The president may delegate authority and responsibility described in this policy to other campus officials pursuant to Section VI of the Standing Orders of the Board of Trustees of the California State University.

All Revision Dates

11/1/2023, 3/28/2022, 5/17/2021, 9/6/2018

Attachments

A: Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree Programs Essential Curricular Concepts

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
EVC	Nathan Evans: Deputy VC ASA ,Chief Acad Offc	11/1/2023
Area Manager/Owner	Laura Massa: Interim Assoc VC Acd&Fac Prgms	10/31/2023
Area Manager/Owner	Leo Cota: Dir, Stra Org Eng & Cultur Dev	10/30/2023