

2017-2018

# DNP Program Student Handbook

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**VCU** School of Nursing

*Creating collaboration. Advancing science. Impacting lives.*

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### **About this Handbook**

This handbook is designed to be a resource for currently enrolled Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) students at Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Nursing (SON) as well as faculty of the DNP Program in Nursing. This handbook supplements the VCU Graduate Bulletin located at: <http://bulletin.vcu.edu/>. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the policies and information contained in each of these resources.

## Welcome from the Dean



It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to the VCU School of Nursing. You have made a great investment in your future by selecting a school that is ranked among the top schools of nursing in the nation. We offer a supportive, collaborative environment to ensure your success as you progress through our program.

This handbook is a very important resource designed to provide you with information on life as a student at the VCU School of Nursing. Our highly trained faculty and staff will support you every step of the way and help you get the most out of your experience here. Graduates of our school represent the future of nursing and are well-prepared to improve the care of the patients we serve.

On behalf of the faculty and staff, I extend our best wishes for a dynamic and rewarding educational experience. Thank you for being a part of our tradition of nursing excellence.

Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN  
Dean, School of Nursing

## Welcome from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs



Congratulations on beginning or continuing your nursing education at the VCU School of Nursing. As the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (“chief academic officer”), I and the team of expert educators and professional staff are committed to assuring that you have a world class educational experience at VCU. In light of an ever changing and complex health care environment, we are constantly employing principals of continuous quality improvement, evolving pedagogical principal and best practices to assure that your academic program is cutting edge. We have much to learn from each other. Please let me know if I can ever be of service to you. A career in nursing is the gift that keeps on giving.

Debra J. Barksdale, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, CNE, FAANP, FAAN  
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, School of Nursing

## Welcome from the Program Director



Congratulations!

I would like to take this opportunity to officially welcome you to Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Nursing. We are excited that you have chosen to take the next step in your educational journey with us!

We hope that you find our Doctorate of Nursing Practice program both challenging and rewarding. In anticipation of potential questions, we have created this DNP Handbook. The Handbook in conjunction with the Graduate Bulletin will act as resources for you as you move through your doctoral program.

Thank you again for choosing us for this exciting chapter in your nursing career. We are looking forward to helping you achieve your academic and advanced nursing practice goals.

Sincerely:

Shelly Smith, DNP, APRN-BC  
Director, DNP Program

## **School of Nursing Mission, Vision and Values**

### **Mission**

We shape the future of nursing through the power of education, discovery and collaboration.

### **Vision**

VCU SON will be the destination for those committed to transforming health care.

### **Values**

Integrity | Compassion | Diversity | Innovation | Collaboration



## Faculty Program Roles

1. Associate Dean of Academic Affairs: The Associated Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA) provides organizational oversight to both the Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) Curriculum Committee and the DNP Program Director (PD).
2. Doctorate of Nursing Practice Curriculum Committee: The DNP Program Curricular Committee (DCC) manages the DNP program curriculum, which in turn is voted on by all nursing faculty.
3. DNP Program Director: The DNP Program Director (DNP PD) serves as a liaison between the DNP program faculty, the DCC and the ADAA.
4. DNP Program Faculty: Doctorally-prepared faculty that possess advanced knowledge, skills and abilities associated with those critical elements recognized in the DNP Essentials.
5. DNP Student Advisor: Doctorally-prepared faculty assigned to DNP students responsible for fostering the best possible learning environment to achieve DNP student learning outcomes.
6. DNP Project Team: A group of 3 or more professionals chosen by the DNP student and student advisor whose goal is to provide oversight and guidance for individual student DNP projects.
7. DNP Program Coordinator: Assists the ADAA in meeting the objectives of the Office of Academic Programs, supports the DNP Program Director and the DNP students.
8. Office of Academic Programs: The Office of Academic Programs (OAP) provides guidance to all School of Nursing Students in matters relating to academic programs, university procedures, administrative requirements, and student orientation.
9. Office of Student Success: The Office of Student Success (OSS) provides support in the following areas: student recruitment, admissions, enrollment management, academic programs, student onboarding, advising and progression, student support, and graduation activities for undergraduate and graduate students in the School of Nursing.

### Responsibilities:

1. Non-academic Administrative Issues: Are to be directed and escalate in the following sequence:
  - a. DNP Student Advisor
  - b. DNP Program Director
  - c. Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.
2. Academic Administrative Issues: Are to be directed to the following in order of precedence:
  - a. DNP Program Faculty
  - b. DNP Student Advisor
  - c. DNP Program Director
  - d. Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
3. DNP Project Administrative Issues: Are to be directed to the following in order of precedence:
  - a. DNP Student Advisor
  - b. DNP Project Team
  - c. DNP Program Director
  - d. Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

## Program Overview

### A. Outcomes of Graduates

#### Program Goals

Students will achieve DNP level competencies by demonstrating:

- I. Use of quality and safety outcomes to evaluate practice improvement initiatives;
- II. Skills in using evidence-based practice to achieve sustainable practice change;
- III. Advanced decision-making skills founded in ethics and the highest level of nursing practice;
- IV. Leadership strategies to influence health policies;
- V. Interprofessional collaboration in health care systems.

#### Student Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the D.N.P. program, students will have the knowledge and skills to:

1. Demonstrate strategic management skills in systems-based care delivery models and approaches designed to promote quality, safety and excellence in nursing practice;
2. Assume a leadership role in the development, implementation and evaluation of health policies that improve quality and safety in health care systems;
3. Translate and disseminate evidence-based practices to improve health care outcomes and reduce disparities;
4. Integrate professional intra- and interdisciplinary best practices to create collaborative sustainable practice change;
5. Integrate knowledge of specialized nursing practice with knowledge from other sciences as the basis for the highest level of nursing practice;
6. Lead efforts to preserve, promote and improve the health of specialty populations;
7. Use health information technology to promote best practices in health care systems;
8. Ensure fiscal accountability when planning practice initiatives that will improve the quality of care delivery;
9. Demonstrate advanced levels of ethical and moral judgment and decision-making.

### B. Technical Standards

The VCU School of Nursing is responsible for providing education without regard to disability while assuring that academic and technical standards are met. This document defines the non-academic criteria for advancement through graduation from the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing.

The following technical standards describe the essential functions that a student is expected to demonstrate in order to fulfill the requirement of the nursing education program, and thus, are required for advancement through and graduation from the program. The technical standards for each category identified below are consistent with the expectations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, including the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. The technical skill areas include motor, sensory/observation, communication, cognitive and behavioral.

Students must read and sign this document before matriculation into the VCU School of Nursing. It is incumbent upon the student to review these technical standards on a regular basis to ensure continued compliance. If a student finds that they are unable to be in compliance with technical standards for an acute or chronic condition, they should speak with their academic advisor and pertinent course faculty immediately.

### Motor Skills

- A student must be able to coordinate gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and the functional use of the senses of touch and vision reasonably to operate a computer keyboard and to read a computer screen or have appropriate accommodation;
- A student must be able to maneuver in the research setting.

### Sensory/Observation

- A student must be able to hear with or without devices of assistance to elicit information from patients, faculty and professionals;
- A student must be able to listen and send clear messages.

### Communications

- A student must possess written and verbal fluency in the English language to elicit information from and provide information to patients, faculty and health care professionals;
- A student must be able to comprehend written communications such as the ability to read, understand and follow directions in the English language to fulfill the required tasks and duties of a doctoral student;
- A student must be able to network with other professionals and demonstrate the ability to engage with appropriate non-verbal and verbal communication.

### Cognitive

- A student must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze and synthesize complex information to solve problems;
- A student must be able to integrate didactic and experiential learning to solve problems with critical judgment and analysis.

### Behavioral

- A student must possess the mental health required for full use of his/her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment and the prompt completion of all responsibilities;
- A student must be able to develop and sustain mature, sensitive and effective relationships with a web of faculty, colleagues and other health care professionals;
- A student must be able to tolerate and function effectively under stress;
- A student must be able to concentrate in the presence of distracting conditions;
- A student must be able to concentrate for prolonged periods of time;
- A student must be able to relate in a professional manner to patients, families, faculty and other health care professionals;
- A student must be able to accept constructive feedback and demonstrate a willingness to respond appropriately;
- A student must be able to read and regulate emotions as well as to recognize their impact on work performance and relationships, especially in the face of angry or emotionally-charged people;
- A student must be able to adapt to and be flexible with changing environments, uncertainty and ambiguity;
- A student must be able to display compassion, empathy, honesty, integrity, interpersonal skills and motivation consistently;
- A student must be able to acquire transportation for on and off-campus classes or meetings outside Virginia Commonwealth University.

## Pre-Enrollment

### A. Criminal Background Check and Drug Screening

#### Policy

An offer of acceptance to the VCU School of Nursing (SON) is conditioned upon the successful completion of a criminal background check (CBC) and drug screening. Students are also required to complete this process upon program re-entry subsequent to a leave of absence, program withdrawal or program separation greater than thirty consecutive days.

*After enrollment*, all students must report any felony, misdemeanor, or court martial charges and convictions to the Assistant Dean of Enrollment & Student Services, which occur during their enrollment within 10 business days of occurrence. For criminal charges, a review committee will consider the nature of the underlying conduct resulting in the charge and make the determination as to whether to suspend the student pending resolution of the criminal proceeding. Criminal charges, by themselves, will not necessarily warrant denial of continued enrollment.

#### Rationale

The SON requires CBC and drug screening for all students prior to enrollment. Background checks and drug screening are conducted to ensure that nursing students are competent, safe, and trustworthy to engage in clinical rotations and other critical aspects of the programs.

The SON also conducts the screenings to:

- Respond to regulatory mandates and the requirements of the School of Nursing's affiliated clinical facilities.
- Bolster the continuing trust of the public in the nursing profession.

#### Procedure

The CBC and drug screening are a mandatory component of the pre-matriculation process. The final decision regarding matriculation of an applicant will be based on the information in the CBC/drug screening reports.

Factors involved in the final decision may include, but are not limited to:

1. The nature, circumstances, and frequency of any reported offense(s).
2. The length of time since the offense(s).
3. Available information that addresses efforts at rehabilitation.
4. The accuracy of the information provided by the applicant.

**Individuals who do not give permission to the conduct of the criminal background check/drug screening or who fail to provide the reports as required will not be allowed to matriculate in the School of Nursing.**

- An independent vendor has been identified by the SON to provide the criminal background and drug screening. Each applicant will be responsible for requesting the report and submitting payment for the report.
- The CBC and drug screening report shall span the prior seven-year period, and shall include all convictions at a felony or misdemeanor level.
- The information obtained through the CBC and drug screening will not become part of a student's academic file and will remain confidential unless the findings result in an institutional action by the SON.

- The CBC and drug screening document will be destroyed upon the student's graduation/separation from the institution.
- The vendor sends the CBC and drug screening reports electronically to the Office of Enrollment and Student Services (OESS) in any decision that may adversely affect the individual.
- Validated background reports found to be in conflict with responses in the application may be grounds for withdrawal of an offer of enrollment based upon submission of false or misleading information on the application.
- The existence of a conviction or a positive drug screen will not necessarily result in a denial of enrollment to the School of Nursing. Instead each case will be reviewed by a committee other than the admissions committee and evaluated on its facts.
  - The admission of students with a conviction or a positive drug screen who are granted entry into VCUSON may not be able to complete the program if their conviction prevents securement of clinical practicum sites.
  - Additionally, students are advised that nursing licensure and subsequent prescription and DEA certification (for NP students) are not guaranteed upon graduation and board certification, but are considered by the state board of nursing in which the individual is applying.

### **Review Committee**

The review committee shall include, but is not limited to the:

- Director of the Office of Student Success,
- Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (or other administrative dean),
- Two faculty members and,
- University attorney as needed to clarify legal processes.

The review committee is responsible for making determinations regarding acceptance or denial of enrollment and communicating the determination to the student.

- Any determination to deny enrollment will be communicated to the student in writing, giving the reason for the denial and allowing the student five business days from the date the communication was sent to respond to the determination before it becomes final.
- The student's response should be sent to the Assistant Dean of Enrollment and Student Services and should include any relevant information concerning the CBC and/or drug screen to be considered by the committee, including any challenge to the accuracy of the report.
- The committee shall consider the response, and shall issue a final determination within 72 hours of receiving the student's response.

### **VCU School of Nursing Disqualifying Criminal Offenses**

#### **Felonies**

1. A crime of violence.
2. Any felony offense involving unlawful sexual behavior.
3. Any felony, the underlying basis of which has been found by the court on the record to include an act of domestic violence.
4. Any felony of child abuse.
5. Any felony offense in another state, the elements which are substantially similar to the elements of any of the above offenses.

#### **Misdemeanors**

- A. Third degree assault.
- B. Any misdemeanor, the underlying factual basis of which has been found by the court on the record to include an act of domestic violence.
- C. A misdemeanor offense of child abuse.
- D. Any misdemeanor offense of sexual assault on a client by a psychotherapist.
- E. Any misdemeanor offense in another state, the elements of which are substantially similar to the elements of any of the misdemeanor offenses listed above.

### **Criminal Histories**

1. Convictions/deferred adjudications involving crimes against persons (physical or sexual abuse, neglect, assault, murder, etc.).
2. Convictions related to moral turpitude (prostitution, public lewdness/exposure, etc.).
3. Convictions/deferred adjudications related to the sale, possession, distribution, or transfer of narcotics or controlled substances.
4. Registered sex offenders.

### **B. Student Verification Form**

Prior to beginning their programs, students will read and sign the Student Verification Form that will remain in each student's file in the Office of Academic Programs. A copy of this form can be found in **Appendix A**.

### **C. Health and Certification Requirements**

Students will comply with the immunization requirements outlined in the **VCU Health Science Certificate of Immunization**. Students are also required to present annual documentation of TB screening and flu vaccine to University Student Health Services by the published deadlines.

Students enrolled in online programs will comply with the immunization requirements outlined in the **VCU Certificate of Immunization**. Students may be required to present documentation of additional immunizations for practicum and research experiences.

See University Student Health Services/Immunizations for additional information (<http://www.students.vcu.edu/health/immunizations/>). All requirements apply to full- and part-time students and must be submitted to the University prior to enrollment.

### **D. School of Nursing Scholarships Application Process**

Students applying for School of Nursing scholarships must complete a School Scholarship Application. To be eligible for any scholarship support, the student must meet requirements specific to the scholarship for which they are applying. Students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be eligible for need based scholarship funds. The deadline for receipt of applications will be published annually by the School of Nursing.

### **Enrollment Credit Hours for Scholarship Eligibility**

For school-based scholarship purposes, full-time students must be enrolled for a minimum of nine credit hours in the fall and spring semesters and three credits in the summer semester plus meet any additional requirements specific to the scholarship for which they are applying.

## Enrollment

### a. Academic Advising

Upon admission, an academic advisor is assigned by the DNP Curriculum Committee in consultation with the Program Director. A student may request a change in advisor at any time. The student must obtain approval from both the current advisor and the new advisor using the Doctoral Student Advisor Change Form located in the DNP and PhD Student Blackboard organization. This form will need the signature of the current advisor acknowledging change of status and signature of the new advisor signifying agreement to mentor the student. The form will need to be submitted to the DNP Program Coordinator.

### Responsibility and Role of the Advisor

The purpose of this advisor/advisee relationship is to provide a mechanism for maintaining faculty/student communication and advisement on professional, academic and other matters. The advisor should meet with their advisee at a minimum of once a semester and as often as necessary during the semester to guide the student's progress. After the initial meeting, most faculty meet with students on an as needed basis. All advising sessions can be done via phone, e-mail or in person unless faculty request otherwise. The academic advisor in the SON will work closely with the student to define plans that target both the academic and non-academic activities that will support their progress through the program.

### Responsibility of the Student

During their time in the program students are expected to be proactive and confer with their nursing faculty advisor about academic planning, progress or program related issues. Students will schedule appointments with their advisor about any program of study changes and if they have questions about electives or as the need arises. Students will begin meeting with their advisor at the beginning of the first semester of school. The student's advisor will be kept informed about the academic and clinical progress by the student with the goal being to avoid academic and clinical problems. In the case of specific course/instructor problems, the student will first discuss the problem with the instructor. If the problem cannot be resolved, the student will discuss the matter with the DNP Program Director.

## B. Degree Requirements

A minimum of 39 graduate credit hours are required for the Doctor of Nursing Practice program.

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements, a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Nursing Practice must be recommended by the faculty and must:

1. Meet all academic requirements of the Graduate School;
2. Complete all requirements for the prescribed curriculum within five calendar years of the first registration for coursework to be credited toward the degree;
3. Earn a minimum grade of B or pass grade in all nursing courses;
4. Earn a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all work presented for graduation;
5. Conform to School of Nursing policies in respect to pass/fail grading for coursework or DNP Project study.

The degree will be granted only after all requirements have been fulfilled and all fees to the university have been paid. Degrees are not granted in absentia unless written request is made to the dean and permission is granted.

Please see **Appendix B.** for plans of study

### C. Course registration

Students should be aware of registration dates set by the university. Students in coursework must be registered for courses prior to the first day of on campus sessions. Full-time students in coursework must be registered for at least nine credit hours each fall and spring semesters and at least three credit hours in the summer semester. More information regarding course registration and minimum/maximum credit hours for graduate students can be found at:

<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate-students/student-load/>.

### D. On-campus Schedule

All DNP students in coursework are required to attend the on-campus experience which occurs at the beginning of each semester. These dates are posted on the VCU SON's website at least one year in advance to allow students to plan their schedules accordingly. This experience is a critical part of the doctoral program and extremely valuable for success in the program. The first day of each semester's courses will be held during the on-campus sessions. These sessions also provide a networking opportunity during which expert speakers and faculty are available to students. The initial on-campus session allows students to obtain their VCU ID card, receive an orientation to library resources, and take a tour of the VCU School of Nursing building. Staff members from the Information Technology department are onsite at each session to provide technical support and to answer questions about online learning, such as managing blackboard.

The on-campus experiences are mandatory. Case by case allowances will be considered for United State Military and Public Health Service personnel who are on deployment orders.

See **Appendix D** On-campus agreement.

### E. Non-Degree Seeking Students

Students who have not been admitted to the School of Nursing may enroll in nursing courses. Permission to enroll in courses is granted by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Only six credits earned as a non-degree seeking student can be used for the DNP degree.

Decisions for enrollment are based on permission of the instructor, space availability and designation of the course as open to non-degree seeking students.

## Academic Policies

### A. Paper Format

Unless otherwise stated by instructor, the most recent *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)* is to be used for all papers written in the School of Nursing.

### B. Grading Scale

A ten-point grading scale will be used in all graduate courses.

A 90 – 100

B 80 – 89

C 70 – 79

D 60 – 69

F Below 60



Courses that receive grades of Pass (P) or Fail (F):

NURS 664  
NURS 665  
NURS 667

### C. Course Grades of "C"

A student who receives a first grade of "C" or below in any graduate course required for graduation must repeat the course. The course must be repeated before taking any courses for which the course in question is a prerequisite. A student who receives a second course grade of "C" in any graduate course will be terminated from the program.

Students should be aware that following any failure to meet progression standards, placement in residency courses is not guaranteed and is made on a space-available basis.

Students will receive official communication from the school related to course grades of "C" or below. The DNP Program Coordinator and student's academic advisor will request a meeting with students who earn a grade of "C" or below to develop a proactive remediation plan to increase the student's chance of academic success.

### D. Student Progression Policy

The progress and performance of students enrolled in the School of Nursing's Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program is regularly monitored to assure timely advancement through the program of study. The purpose of this review is to make certain that each student is making satisfactory progress in her/his program of study based upon stated criteria established by the School of Nursing and Virginia Commonwealth University. This review also provides an opportunity for students who are having difficulties to obtain the assistance and support that they need. The progression policy can be found in the student organization in Blackboard.

### E. Testing Procedures

Examinations and standardized tests are essential measures of competence and knowledge and integral to assuring that students provide safe and effective patient care. The School of Nursing has established the following requirements to assure integrity of the testing environment.

Students sitting for in-person examinations are expected to:

- Arrive at the designated room on time.
- Place all books, coats, purses, etc. at the front of the classroom.
- Turn cell phones off and place securely in backpack or purse.
- Remove virtual reality glasses/goggles or electronic "smart" watches
- Remove hats, hoodies, and jackets with large pockets.
- Leave bottled beverages with labels with backpack/purse (only bottled water is allowed).
- If calculators are permitted, only freestanding pocket calculators are allowed. Cell phones cannot be used as a calculator. In computer based examinations, a calculator is embedded within the software.
- If computer based examination, refrain from opening any computer program other than the one to take the examination.
- Report any misconduct or annoying behavior to the faculty/ proctor during the examination so appropriate action may be taken.
- If provided with a GradeIt type paper test, credit is given to the answers on the answer sheet and will not be given for any item erroneously transposed

- Place name and VCU student identification number (vID) on the answer sheet and the test booklet when paper is used and return it to the faculty or proctor.
- Use the restroom prior to sitting for the examination. Students who must use the restroom during an examination will be accompanied by a proctor at all times.
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity and not utilize textbooks, notecards or personal assistance during the examination process.

If suspected of cheating, the student's examination will be removed. In accordance with VCU policy, students suspected of cheating will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

### Missed Examinations

In the event of a personal emergency (e.g., unexpected illness, death in the family) or participation in a University activity (which meets the VCU Student Handbook criteria for an excused absence) the student must notify the course faculty in advance. In advance is defined as *prior to the beginning of the examination for a personal emergency* or *at least 2 weeks in advance if the student is participating in a University event*. Students should notify the course faculty using the method preferred by course faculty (e.g., phone call, email). Examinations will not be given to students who have not provided timely notification of a SON-accepted absence and will result in a grade of "0" on that examination.

Examinations may be made up only in the case of absences for reasons acceptable to the course faculty.

The make-up examination will be taken within one week of the scheduled examination or at the discretion of the course faculty. The student must make arrangements for the make-up examination with the course faculty. Exception may be made for student absences of one week or more with the concurrence of faculty and program director. Make-up examinations may be a different version of the original examination.

Standardized examinations (e.g., HESI) can only be administered at the designated time and cannot be made-up.

### Online Testing

- Quizzes and examinations will be administered online unless otherwise specified by faculty. At course faculty discretion, quizzes and examinations may be administered in a proctored learning environment.
- Unless otherwise specified by course faculty, students may not use textbooks, notebooks, or audio, visual, or written input from others.
- Students taking quizzes and examinations online are required to work independently. Work submitted online must be work completed by the student only. Students should not take quizzes or examinations with a partner or receive input or assistance from another student or individual.
- Quizzes and examinations that are given online will have date and time limitations for when the examination will be available. Any student who fails to take the quiz or examination during the time frame allotted will receive a grade of "0" for that assessment.
- All examinations and quizzes must *only* be taken by the student enrolled in the course.

## Students Requiring Testing Accommodations

Students who have been granted a letter of testing accommodations in accordance with Federal Laws,\* will generally take all scheduled *in person* examinations at the Division of Academic Success offices (VMI Building 1000 E. Marshall St). This will assure a testing environment that addresses the student's specific accommodation need.

\*American Disabilities Act 1990, amended 2008; Rehabilitation Act 1973

### F. Unsatisfactory DNP Project Progression

A student who receives a grade of "F" in NURS 665, DNP Project courses, will receive a warning letter from the DNP Program Coordinator, copied to the DNP Project Advisor. Consequently, the student will expeditiously meet with the DNP Project Advisor to develop and document a written plan for academic progress and improvement. A student who earns a second "F" in NURS 665 will be terminated from the program. A student who receives a final grade of "F" in NURS 667 will be terminated from the program.

### G. Grade Appeals

The School of Nursing follows the university guidelines with the exception of spring grades. For grades awarded in the spring semester, the written appeal must be submitted no later than 14 days after the beginning of the Summer semester. Refer to the VCU Grade Review Procedure for additional information.

### H. Separation from the School of Nursing

Before separating from the School of Nursing, the student must drop/withdraw all nursing courses. The student should contact the University registrar for any additional guidance and requirements for separation from the school.

### I. Readmission after Dismissal from the Graduate Program

Following dismissal from the doctoral program, students are not eligible for readmission.

### J. Timeline from Admissions to Graduation

The time limit for completion of the DNP program is **five years from the point of matriculation.**

### K. Withdrawal from courses

Please refer to university policy (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate-students/>). Students should consult with course faculty and DNP Program Coordinator prior to withdrawing from a course.

### L. Leave of Absence

Once enrolled in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program, students are required to follow their plan of study. In the event that a student needs a period of time away from the program, the student must submit a written request for a leave of absence by completing the *Request for Leave of Absence (LOA)* form. The form should be submitted to the DNP Program Coordinator. LOAs will be considered on an individual basis.

Students are expected to complete their degree within 5 years from the time they begin the program, as this is the official policy of the University. A LOA does not extend the 5-year requirement for program completion (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate->

[students/leave-absence-withdrawal-policies/](#)). Students must be aware that if an extended leave is taken, program/curricular changes may occur that influence student progression. Students are advised to understand that returning to school after an authorized LOA will require a revision to the student's plan of study. Per School of Nursing policy, students are required to complete a criminal background check and drug screen upon program re-entry subsequent to a leave of absence, program withdrawal or program separation greater than thirty consecutive days.

**Additional Information for Those Requesting a Leave of Absence (LOA) for Health-related Reasons:** If a student needs to request a LOA for health reasons, the student must provide a note from a healthcare provider to the DNP Program Coordinator prior to the start of the LOA. The student will also need to provide a healthcare provider's note upon their return to the program, stating that the student is fit to return to school.

See **Appendix C** – Leave of Absence form.

#### M. Communicating Issues and Concerns

The School of Nursing strives to create an atmosphere that facilitates communication between students and faculty and maximizes student learning and achievement. If students have issues/concerns regarding their courses, clinical experiences or any aspect of their academic program, they are expected to demonstrate professionalism in addressing their issues/concerns to the appropriate person(s). The academic advisor (for undergraduate students) or appropriate Program Director can assist students in navigating the appropriate steps.

The following steps will aide in effectively communicating issues and concerns.

1. The student should first meet with and discuss the issue/concern with the faculty member directly related to the issue/concern. (If the student feels uncomfortable addressing the issue/concern directly with that individual, the student may proceed to step 2. However, faculty have a right to be informed of student issues/concerns that involve them.)
2. If the issue/concern remains unresolved after step 1, the student should meet with the Program Director to discuss the issue/concern. The Program Director will review the issue/concern and a) facilitate a resolution with course faculty for course-related issues/concerns and/or b) refer the issue/concern to the appropriate Department Chair for faculty related issues.
3. If the issue/concern remains unresolved after step 2, the student should meet with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to discuss the issue/concern.
4. If additional actions are indicated, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs will direct the student to the Dean and other university-level processes, as appropriate.

#### N. Unprofessional Conduct

In addition to those standards of conduct described in the Rules and Procedures of Virginia Commonwealth University and the VCU Medical Center Code of Conduct, a student may be suspended or dismissed from the school for failure to meet academic requirements or failure to exhibit the attitudes and skills deemed necessary to function as a professional nurse. The School of Nursing recognizes its responsibility to the nursing profession and to the health care consumer. Therefore, any action by a nursing student considered to be unprofessional conduct shall be deemed cause for disciplinary action.

Unprofessional conduct may be defined as, but not limited to:

- Fraud or deceit in filing application for admission to school such as false representation on the application;
- An act that violates the accepted social norms regarding conduct of one person towards another;
- Social norm violations that refer to the laws, written or unwritten, which protects the individual and/or his/her property from unwanted acts of another such as stealing, lying, cheating and slander;
- Conviction of a felony.

#### O. Retention of Course/Clinical Materials:

Students are strongly encouraged to keep a portfolio of course and clinical materials from each course taken throughout their program of study. Information from such courses may be valuable in seeking certification, licensure, and employment after graduation. Some states require detailed information about the course and clinical work including course outlines for licensure. Some examples of information that may be useful to keep include course syllabi, evaluations from instructors and preceptors, logs, major papers, and case studies.

### Residency Practicum Policies

#### A. Enrollment Restrictions for DNP Residency

Enrollment in residency courses is restricted to students admitted to the School of Nursing or those enrolled in an international exchange program with VCU School of Nursing. Enrollment in all residency courses is based on availability of space in these courses.

#### B. Residency Placements

Residency Placements assignments are based on course objectives, faculty/student assessment of individual learning needs, preceptor availability, resources, and availability of sites with established affiliation agreements. To ensure quality residency experiences, an Affiliation Agreement between the school and the site must be established. Therefore, students will refrain from contacting potential content experts directly, but rather discuss residency opportunities with their advisor.

Furthermore, there are conditions set forth in affiliation agreements including onboarding paperwork, compliance documentation, and/or applications set by the facility. **It is the student's responsibility to ensure all residency requirements are met and to provide the proper documentation by the posted due dates.** If the student fails to comply with these conditions, then the student will not be allowed to participate in the practicum and consequently the student will not successfully complete the course.

#### C. Professional Appearance and Attire in Clinical Settings

The Faculty of the SON believe that an image of professional competence, self-respect and respect for others is conveyed, in part, by one's appearance and attire. In addition, certain aspects of one's appearance and attire have implications for patient safety and the ability to perform one's duties effectively. To address these professional concerns, the SON has adopted the following policy which outlines requirements and expectations with respect to professional appearance and attire of both graduate and undergraduate students while in clinical settings.

#### *General guidelines*

The School of Nursing expects students in any of its programs to consistently present, through appearance and attire, a positive public image of both nursing and the VCU School of Nursing.

General appearance should contribute to effective educational and patient care environments and reflect a high standard of personal cleanliness and hygiene at all times.

Clothing (including uniforms, lab coat and street clothes) must be clean, neat, free of wrinkles and well-fitted.

Regardless of attire, a VCU ID badge must be worn in all clinical or clinically related situations (including but not limited to pre-clinical assessment, patient care situations, observational experiences and simulation settings such as the VCU SON Clinical Learning Center).

Students are expected to adhere to this policy. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from the clinical agency and is evidence of unprofessional behavior.

### ***Professional attire***

Professional attire consists of clothes that are consistent with “business casual”.

- For men, trousers worn at or near the waist and shirts with sleeves and collars which are buttoned so that the chest is covered.
- For women, slacks or moderately cut dresses or skirts around knee length. Modestly constructed tops that have sleeves and do not reveal cleavage should be worn with slacks or skirts.
- For all, shoes should be low-heeled with closed toes, and of non-porous material. Socks or stockings must be worn as appropriate.
- For all, fingernails should be trimmed and without nail polish. Please note nail polish and/or artificial nails including extensions, tips, gel overlays, resin wraps, silks, paper UVC polish and acrylic fingernails all pose unacceptable infection risks to patients.

Professional judgment and discretion should be exercised in selecting street clothing for wear in clinical situations when a uniform is not required. To assist in the development of a professional wardrobe, the following list is provided to describe types of clothes and shoes that do not convey a professional image:

- Any item of clothing constructed of see-through fabrics
- Jeans and other items constructed of denim
- Tee shirts
- Sweatshirts or sweatpants
- Tight fitting pants or tops
- Slogan imprinted items
- Shorts, skorts and Capri-length pants
- Short or slit skirts
- Clothing which exposes midriffs, back, chest or underwear
- Low rise pants or rolled-down waist band of scrub pants
- Flip-flops or slides
- Open-toed sandals
- Hats or headdresses of any sort, unless worn for medical or religious purposes

### **Residency**

National accreditation requirements dictate completion of five hundred (500) practice hours for all post-Master’s DNP programs. These hours are structured into the curriculum via 12 academic credits of Residency courses. At the post-Master’s DNP level, practice hours focus on developing the skills

needed to lead interprofessional and interdisciplinary efforts to improve care outcomes. Experiences will vary depending upon the student's abilities in relation to the DNP Essential competencies. Practice experiences, settings, and the focus of residency hours are individualized and developed mutually by the student and faculty advisor. Qualified content experts, based on their expertise and experience, will be identified at the student's clinical site to provide support as needed to identify and complete particular practice experiences. Each residency course has individualized objectives, assignments, and products that demonstrate student achievement of specific DNP Essential competencies.

Residency courses are graded on a pass-fail basis. Students, content experts, and faculty advisors all contribute to evaluation of student success in meeting the identified objectives developed for each residency course; final evaluation of all residency requirements is the responsibility of the faculty advisor for the course.

The residency experience is individualized; however, faculty reserves the right to make on-site visits as indicated. The following criteria will trigger an advisor's decision to travel to the site for direct observation:

- Content expert concerns regarding student performance.
- Unsatisfactory communications with student or content expert that cannot be resolved by telephone or video conference.

### **DNP Project**

All DNP programs culminate in the successful completion of scholarly work, the DNP Project. In collaboration with their DNP Project Team, students design, implement, and evaluate a quality/safety project. The DNP Project will be overseen by the student's advisor, who serves as the DNP Project Advisor, and a DNP Project Team comprised of the DNP Project Advisor and (at a minimum) two doctorally-prepared content experts selected by the student in consultation with the Project Advisor. One member will be from the practice setting where the student conducts the project.

The curriculum is designed so that students begin planning their DNP Project during initial coursework, and complete the project in their final semester of study. Two DNP Project courses, NURS 665, DNP Project Proposal Development, and NURS 667, DNP Project Implementation and Evaluation, are built into the curriculum in the final two semesters of the program. Each course is graded pass-fail. The DNP Project Advisor serves as the faculty of record for each course. Students will develop a proposal and have it approved (including VCU Institutional Review Board approval, if required) during the first course, and implement the project in the second course.

The final DNP Project product is a scholarly manuscript suitable for publication in a professional journal that will describe the findings of the DNP Project. The manuscript provides evidence of the student's critical thinking and ability to translate research and best evidence through problem identification, proposal development, implementation, and evaluation. Students defend the written project in an oral presentation to their Project Team at the end of NURS 667, and each Project Team member votes to "approve" or "disapprove" the project. In the event of two or more negative votes, the Project Team will make recommendations for revisions or additional coursework specifying a timeline for completion of the revised project. Students will be given a second opportunity to successfully complete the oral defense. In the event of two failures, the student will be dismissed from the program.

## **Graduation and Commencement**

At the start of the final semester of the program, students will receive details via email on how to initiate the graduation check out process along with specifics regarding graduation ceremonies. Both VCU and VCU's School of Nursing hold ceremonies in May and December. There is no August ceremony, but August graduates are invited to participate in December's ceremonies. School of Nursing Recognition Ceremonies typically take place on the Friday evening preceding the university's graduation ceremony. Students are also encouraged to attend the university-wide ceremony on the following Saturday morning, where the nursing graduates will be recognized as a cohort.

More information regarding graduation and commencement can be found on the university's website: <http://www.commencement.vcu.edu/Graduation-Info/>.

## **Student Travel**

The VCU School of Nursing (SON) may provide travel assistance to current doctoral students to attend a national or regional research meeting or conference, depending upon the availability of funds. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs determines any restrictions on who receives the support. Priority is given to students who are presenting a paper or poster. The SON may pay up to \$500 towards conference/meeting expenses which includes registration fees and transportation to/from the conference or meeting. Limitations on the amount of support are set by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and are based on available funds and the number of students who are requesting funds.

### **Procedure:**

Before the conference, meeting or travel destination, students who wish to apply for travel funds should:

1. Notify their faculty advisor and indicate how the conference or meeting fits their educational or career plans.
2. Obtain support/approval of the faculty advisor.
3. Complete the SON Travel Request form and attach a copy of the email from their advisor approving the travel. (The Budget Code/Index field should be left blank.)
4. Email the completed materials to the DNP/PhD Program Coordinator indicating "PhD Student or "DNP Student in the subject field. The student must complete the Travel Information section of the form according to their preferred method of travel and provide a copy of their air or rail travel itinerary.
5. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA) will then review and make a final decision on the request and the amount.
6. Upon ADAA approval, the PhD/DNP Program Coordinator will submit a SON Travel Request Web Help Desk Ticket for processing by the SON travel administrator.

### **Upon return from the conference, meeting or travel destination, students must:**

Submit receipts to the PhD/DNP Program Coordinator for expenses that are being reimbursed, with the exceptions of meals. The travel administrator will then process the on-line Expense Report to complete the reimbursement process.



## VCU Honor System

Virginia Commonwealth University is committed to the intellectual and academic success of a diverse student body; research and discovery that advances knowledge, inspires creativity, and improves human health; and the global engagement of students, faculty, and staff that transforms lives and communities. In pursuit of these goals, the university's core values are accountability, achievement, collaboration, freedom, innovation, service, diversity, and integrity.

VCU recognizes that honesty, truth, and integrity are values central to its mission to advance knowledge and student success both in the world VCU students will enter, or return to, once they have graduated and in the university community as a microcosm of that world. In a community devoted to learning, a foundation of honor must exist if that community is to thrive with respect and harmony. Therefore, all members of the university community must conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty, ethics, and integrity at all times. Additional standards of academic and professional integrity consistent with this Honor System may apply to students in professional programs.

Because academic dishonesty is a violation of the profound trust of the entire academic community, the Honor System intends to:

- Foster an environment at VCU where academic dishonesty is not tolerated;
- Prevent any student from gaining, or attempting to gain, an unfair advantage over other students through academic misconduct;
- Define what constitutes academic misconduct and what conduct is expected of all members of the university community;
- Cultivate a centralized system of education and awareness of the Honor System; and
- Instill in members of the university community their responsibility for upholding academic integrity by recognizing that:
  - There is NO neutral stance when dishonesty occurs;
  - Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of academic dishonesty is not a neutral act;
  - Failure to take action detracts from a community of trust; and
  - Knowingly allowing others to represent the work of others as their own is as serious an offense as submitting another's work as your own.

It is important to report EVERY suspected incident of academic misconduct to ensure consistency across courses and departments, due process rights, appropriate response to repeated academic misconduct, and protection from unfounded allegations of misconduct.

More information can be found on the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at <https://students.vcu.edu/studentconduct/vcu-honor-system/> .

## Use of Social Media

Patient confidentiality is fundamental to professional nursing practice.

Please remember the following:

- Patient information learned by the nursing student during the course of treatment must be safeguarded by the nursing student.
- You may not take, send, or receive oral recordings, pictures, or videos of patients, family members, or colleagues in the clinical setting.

- You cannot discuss (orally or in writing) your patients, family members, health care providers, healthcare personnel, or your clinical experiences on any social media site.
- You must promptly report any breach of confidentiality or privacy to your course or clinical faculty.

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) has published an excellent white paper on the Nurse's Guide to Social Media available on their website: <https://www.ncsbn.org/3739.htm>

## School of Nursing Organizations

### A. Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society of Nursing

The Gamma Omega Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing was established at Virginia Commonwealth University in 1978. Chapter membership is open to current nursing students as well as nurse clinicians and nurse researchers. Review the membership guidelines and view networking opportunities at their webpage: <http://nursing.vcu.edu/about-us/sigma-theta-tau/>

### B. Student Leadership Council

The Student Leadership Council seeks to establish a strong sense of community within the School of Nursing through student, faculty, and staff interactions.

The members of the Student Leadership Council provide advice and the student perspective to School of Nursing leadership on a variety of topics and they serve as ambassadors of the School of Nursing among their peers and in their communities.

Student membership consists of class directors from each program and leaders of School of Nursing student organizations.

The council meets three times per semester during the regular academic year.

## Non-Academic Policies and Information

### A. Inclement Weather and Disaster Response

The School of Nursing follows the University Office Closings Policy and other policies that relate to disasters and emergencies will be followed.

### Information Related to Inclement Weather and Disaster Response

The VCU Office Closings Policy and other policies and procedures relating to disasters and emergencies are located on the University web site.

The telephone number for the VCU Inclement Weather and Information Hotline is (804) 828-6736. Any university emergencies or notifications of inclement weather will be announced on the main university website, <http://alert.vcu.edu> and the local news. In the event that there are detailed announcements to augment the information provided by the University, they will be disseminated to School of Nursing employees and students via e-mail.

### B. Emergency Preparedness Procedures

**For the university:** Current operating conditions for the university are posted at the VCU Alert Website <http://alert.vcu.edu>. The website provides resources for emergency contacts and what to do in the event of an emergency. This website is where students, faculty and staff can sign up for text alerts. VCU's text message alert system is used to provide immediate information about campus

emergencies, weather delays and cancellations. \*\*When the university is closed, practica are cancelled.

**Specific to the School of Nursing:** In the event that there is an emergency that is specific to the School of Nursing, an email will go out to faculty, staff and students, information will be posted on the School of Nursing main webpage, and information will be posted on the SON Blackboard portal for School of Nursing students, faculty and staff. Faculty, staff and students can contact the SON emergency phone number at 804-828-1307. This message will be updated in the event that there is a situation that closes the School of Nursing building when the university remains open.

**Fire:** Follow the VCU “RACE” procedure.

- Remove anyone in danger.
- Activate the alarm.
- Close the doors to contain the smoke as the building is being evacuated.
- Extinguish the fire, if trained.

### **Earthquake**

- Do not set off the fire alarm.
- Do not exit the building.
- Do shelter in place.

### **Tornado**

- Move to the lowest level and interior space or along a corridor wall away from windows and glass in shelter.
- Close all doors, including main corridors.
- If outside, quickly move to nearest sturdy building.

### **Hazardous Materials**

- Call 804-828-1234
- Evacuate and designate someone to talk with the Fire Department.
- Notify emergency personnel if exposed, or have details on the spill.

**Assembly Areas:** There are two designated assembly areas for the School of Nursing. One area is the loading zone located directly adjacent to the building. The second area is the sidewalk near the Martin Luther King Bridge.

**Floor Wardens:** The School of Nursing Floor Wardens are responsible for coordinating the evacuation of the floors during a fire or other evacuation emergency. Additionally, floor wardens are responsible for assisting any evacuees located in the “Areas of Rescue Assistance” or notifying emergency responders of their location.

### **C. Food and Beverages Policy**

Food and beverages (with the exception of bottled water) can be consumed only in designated areas of the building. It is the responsibility of all members of the School of Nursing community to assist with enforcement of this policy. Designated areas in which food and beverages are allowed are the 1st floor student lounge, quiet study area and doctoral student area, third floor faculty/administrative professional lounge, Dean’s conference room, conference rooms 3038, 3001f and 4001c and private offices. Permission for use of classrooms 1013 and 2001d for functions that include consumption of food and beverages may be requested. Requests for permission for these special functions must be

made to the Office of the Dean and scheduled through the room scheduling office of the School of Nursing. Scheduled classes will have priority for use of these specially designated classrooms.

When a room is used for a function that involves food and beverages, it carries with it the responsibility of the users to clean the room entirely of any food or containers and dispose of in appropriate receptacles. If it is necessary for the School of Nursing to contract professional cleaning for any debris, spills or stains that resulted from the special event, costs will be charged to the sponsor of the event.

#### D. Building Access

The School of Nursing building is open Monday – Friday from 7:00 am – 5:00 pm. Students must use their ID badge to access the building after hours, including weekends.

#### E. Student Identification Cards/Badges

All faculty and staff at the university and medical center are required to carry an identification card. ID cards are required to access the School of Nursing after business hours and are needed to obtain a discount (10%) at the campus bookstores, hospital cafeteria and various other dining locations on campus (see Places to Eat). The first ID card is provided at no charge. Replacement cards (lost or stolen) are provided for a fee which is due at the time the new card is obtained. For more information, consult the Card Office website (<http://vcucard.vcu.edu/>).

#### F. Student Lounge

The Student Lounge on the first floor is open to all students. If food and/or drinks are being consumed, students are responsible for cleaning up after themselves as necessary. The kitchen that is located off of the student lounge is equipped with microwaves and a refrigerator. The refrigerator is purged every Friday afternoon and all remaining items are discarded.

#### G. Quiet Study Room

The Quiet Study Room is open during building operating hours and can be accessed through the Student Lounge. No food or drink are allowed in the Quiet Study Room.

#### H. Photocopying

There is a photocopier for student use available at the top of the stairs on the second floor.

#### I. Technology

There are both Windows and Apple computers available for student use on the first floor in the quiet study lounge, located adjacent to the student lounge.

There are two pay for print stations located near the vending machines on the first floor and at the top of the stairs on the second floor. Students can go to: <http://go.vcu.edu/p4p> to download the drivers on their personal laptops so that they can print to the pay for print stations from their laptops. Sending a job to pay for print allows access to the print job from any pay for print printer on campus.

Pay for print requires RamBucks which can be used for goods and services at VCU. To find out how to obtain and use RamBucks, please go to: <http://vcucard.vcu.edu/myrambucks.html>

#### J. Parking

Visit the VCU parking website at <http://www.parking.vcu.edu>

#### K. Name and Address Changes

Students must ensure that their name and addresses (local, mailing, permanent and remit to) are up-to-date in eServices at all times. For name changes, students must submit to the Office of Records & Registration a copy of their new Social Security card (or applicable documentation) and an updated Personal Update Form. Additional procedural information can be found in the student's eServices account, under the "Personal Information" tab.

#### L. Recycling and Trash Receptacles

The VCU campus is an environment of sustainability. As such, there are specially-marked containers in the School of Nursing building and around campus for specific salvageable materials. There are separate trash containers for "organic items" such as food and liquid and for all other items such paper, plastic, metal, and glass.

#### M. Library Services

The VCU Library has many resources to assist you in meeting your academic goals. The library has a School of Nursing liaison who can assist students with educational and research needs. The following is the link to the VCU Library: [www.library.vcu.edu](http://www.library.vcu.edu).

Nationally, Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences is a top-tier health sciences library. It holds one of the largest and most extensive collections of health sciences literature in North America. The library primarily serves the MCV Campus, which houses one of the oldest medical schools in the South, founded in 1838. The library, in one form or location or another, has been a part of the medical campus since 1897. Located on 12th Street—two blocks north of the Gateway Building at the VCU Medical Center and within easy walks to the schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing and Allied Health Professions—the library is physically central to today's health sciences campus. It provides access to affiliated students, faculty, clinicians and practicing health care professionals on and off campus.

#### N. Division for Academic Success (DAS)

The Division for Academic Success provides academic support for students who need assistance with test-taking skills, study strategies and preparation for board/licensing exams. DAS also provide disability support services to students on the MCV Campus who have a documented disability. The following is a link to the DAS website: <http://das.vcu.edu>

#### O. VCU Writing Center

The Writing Center is a peer-based learning support service for currently-enrolled VCU students. Their primary focus is to help students become the strongest writers possible. The Writing Center does not edit or proofread papers, but rather discusses big picture issues such as structure, organization, and how to best articulate ideas. For more information, the Writing Center's website is: <http://writing.vcu.edu/>.

## Appendix A. Student Verification Form



### 2017-18 DNP Student Verification Form

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have carefully read and I am responsible for all of the following:

- I acknowledge that email is the official mode of communication for the university and school and that I am responsible for using my VCU.edu email address for university/school related communication.
- I acknowledge that I am responsible for knowing the requirements and the policies of the University and School of Nursing as published in the policies on the school's web page, the University Bulletin, and my program specific SON Student Handbook
  - o Background/Drug Screening Policy and related items-
    - All students must also report any felony or misdemeanor charges and convictions, which occur during their enrollment within 10 business days of occurrence to the Assistant Dean of Enrollment and Student Services.
    - Students are also required to complete Background/Drug Screening process upon re-entry subsequent to a leave of absence, program withdrawal or program separation greater than thirty consecutive days.
    - I acknowledge that some clinical agencies with which I work as a student may have policies including but not limited to additional drug testing, immunizations, criminal background checks, and manner of dress or appearance and that I am responsible for knowing and following these policies and am responsible for any associated cost. I give permission to VCU to release my immunization history if required by the clinical agency.
    - I give permission to the VCU SON to release relevant information if required by the clinical agency. I understand the information may be released orally or in the form of copies of written records, as preferred by the requestor. The information released could contain, but is not limited to, such non directory information as: work history, clinical rotation/practicum history, last four digits of my social security number, previous educational institutions, copies of my BLS/ACLS, copies of my immunization history, and copies of my nursing license.
    - It is possible that I may have to withdraw from the School of Nursing if my criminal background check makes me ineligible for placement at clinical sites because of contractual agreements between the School and the agency.
- I acknowledge that my residency may be anywhere in Virginia or on any day of the week including evening or weekend hours in addition to the regular day hours. I acknowledge that I am responsible for my own transportation to clinical sites as well as the associated costs related to these experiences.
- I acknowledge that professional nursing ethics prohibits posting photographs or any information about a patient or staff through any electronic or non-electronic means including, but not limited to social networking sites, blogs, and tweeting. Violation may result in disciplinary and/or legal action.

- I acknowledge that I must register for all nursing course by the required date. I am responsible for reviewing the VCU academic calendar and course schedule.
- I acknowledge that DNP students in Project phase are to schedule a project committee meeting not less than twice a semester with committee members.
- I am responsible to work with my advisor to ensure I am following my plan of study. If a change is needed regarding my plan of study, I am required to review changes and obtain permission for those changes with my advisor.
- I acknowledge and understand that should I become out of step with my plan of study due to voluntary or medical withdrawal, leave of absence, suspension, or failure that I will be permitted to return to my program of study pending space availability.
- I certify that my license to practice as a Registered Nurse is current and unrestricted and that failure to renew my RN license will result in removal from the program.
- I certify that my certification to practice as an advance practice nurse is current and that failure to maintain my certification will result in removal from the program.
- I acknowledge that if I want to do any required field placement in a state other than Virginia, I will consult with appropriate faculty and administration about the implications of doing so with respect to the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (NC-SARA), a national reciprocity agreement among states.
- I acknowledge that a DNP student who has completed coursework requirements for a degree must register for a minimum of one credit at VCU each semester until the degree is awarded.
- I acknowledge that I must send my **Certificate of Immunization for VCU Health Science Students** to University Student Health Services prior to the first day of class and if required I will provide proof of documents. I acknowledge that University Student Health Services will review my record and will place a hold on my account if I am not in compliance with university requirement.
- I am responsible for completing the School of Nursing's End of Program survey and an Exit Interview following completion of the final project, as well as completing the DNP Alumni Survey at 1 and 3 years post-graduation.
- I certify that I have or will upload to Typhon all of the following documents and that they are current through the required time period:
  - o American Heart Association Basic Life Support for Health Care Providers
  - o All immunizations required of the VCU Health Science Students:
    - TB- Annual PPD current, or record of negative chest x-ray
    - Hepatitis B vaccine and titer verification of immunity
    - Varicella
    - MMR
    - Seasonal Flu Vaccine (must be posted prior to Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>)

**My signature indicates that I am in compliance with all of the conditions stated above.**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B - Plans of Study

### Full-Time

### Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing Doctor of Nursing Practice Full-Time Plan of Study

| Course # | Course Title  | Credits   | Term Planned | Term Completed | Comments |
|----------|---|-----------|--------------|----------------|----------|
| NURS 605 | Statistical Methods for Quality Improvement           | 3 (3d)    | Fall 1       |                |          |
| NURS 608 | Quality Improvement in Practice                       | 3 (3d)    | Fall 1       |                |          |
| NURS 610 | Health Information and Data Management                | 3 (3d)    | Fall 1       |                |          |
|          |   | <b>9</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 606 | Evaluating Evidence to Improve Health Outcomes        | 3 (3d)    | Spring 1     |                |          |
| NURS 607 | Epidemiology and Population Health                    | 3 (3d)    | Spring 1     |                |          |
| NURS 664 | DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum                     | 3 (3c)    | Spring 1     |                |          |
|          |   | <b>9</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 665 | DNP Project I: Proposal Development                   | 3         | Summer 1     |                |          |
|          |   | <b>3</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 638 | Health Policy Leadership and Advocacy                 | 3 (3d)    | Fall 2       |                |          |
| NURS 664 | DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum                     | 6 (6c)    | Fall 2       |                |          |
|          |   | <b>9</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 621 | Leadership and Organizational Systems                 | 3 (3d)    | Spring 2     |                |          |
| NURS 664 | DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum                     | 3 (3c)    | Spring 2     |                |          |
| NURS 667 | DNP Project II: Project Implementation and Evaluation | 3 (3d)    | Spring 2     |                |          |
|          |   | <b>9</b>  |              |                |          |
|          | <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>39</b> |              |                |          |

**c-clinical hours (1 clinical hour = 45 clock hours) d-didactic**

A maximum of one third of the didactic hours required for a graduate degree or any graduate certificate program may be transferred from another VCU program or outside institution and, if not applied previously toward another degree, may be applied toward a degree. All transfer work must be at the “A” or “B” grade level from an accredited institution or university. VCU will not accept credits that do not apply to a graduate degree at the offering institution for transfer, nor will it accept credits from unaccredited institutions for transfer.



**Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing  
Doctor of Nursing Practice  
Part-Time Plan of Study**

| Course # | Course Title  | Credits   | Term Planned | Term Completed | Comments |
|----------|---|-----------|--------------|----------------|----------|
| NURS 605 | Statistical Methods for Quality Improvement           | 3 (3d)    | Fall 1       |                |          |
| NURS 608 | Quality Improvement in Practice                       | 3 (3d)    | Fall 1       |                |          |
|          |   | <b>6</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 606 | Evaluating Evidence to Improve Health Outcomes        | 3 (3d)    | Spring 1     |                |          |
| NURS 607 | Epidemiology and Population Health                    | 3 (3d)    | Spring 1     |                |          |
|          |   | <b>6</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 664 | DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum                     | 3 (3c)    | Summer 1     |                |          |
|          |   | <b>3</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 610 | Health Information and Data Management                | 3 (3d)    | Fall 2       |                |          |
| NURS 665 | DNP Project I: Proposal Development                   | 3 (3d)    | Fall 2       |                |          |
|          |   | <b>6</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 621 | Leadership and Organizational Systems                 | 3 (3d)    | Spring 2     |                |          |
| NURS 664 | DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum                     | 3 (3c)    | Spring 2     |                |          |
|          |   | <b>6</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 664 | DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum                     | 3 (3c)    | Summer 2     |                |          |
|          |   | <b>3</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 664 | DNP Residency: Mentored Practicum                     | 3 (3c)    | Fall 3       |                |          |
| NURS 638 | Health Policy Leadership and Advocacy                 | 3 (3d)    | Fall 3       |                |          |
|          |   | <b>6</b>  |              |                |          |
| NURS 667 | DNP Project II: Project Implementation and Evaluation | 3 (3d)    | Spring 3     |                |          |
|          |   | <b>3</b>  |              |                |          |
|          | <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>39</b> |              |                |          |

**c-clinical hours (1 clinical hour = 45 clock hours) d-didactic**

A maximum of one third of the didactic hours required for a graduate degree or any graduate certificate program may be transferred from another VCU program or outside institution and, if not applied previously toward another degree, may be applied toward a degree. All transfer work must be at the "A" or "B" grade level from an accredited institution or university. VCU will not accept credits that do not apply to a graduate degree at the offering institution for transfer, nor will it accept credits from unaccredited institutions for transfer.

**Appendix C - Leave of Absence Form**

**School of Nursing  
Virginia Commonwealth University**

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM**

(Please complete and submit to the Office of Academic Programs)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**In addition to completing this form, you need to ensure that you are withdrawn from any current courses. You can withdraw or drop classes using eServices.**

**Dates of requested LOA:** From beginning of \_\_\_\_\_ semester/year through the end of \_\_\_\_\_ semester/year.

\*Student will return to the program at the start of the \_\_\_\_\_ semester of \_\_\_\_\_ (year).

Reason for requested leave of absence:

Advisor's comments on the leave of absence:

**\*Students are expected to notify their advisor and the program coordinator of their intention to return to the program, at least 60 days prior to the start of the semester in which the student is returning. Otherwise, the student will be withdrawn from the program.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature and Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor's Signature and Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Director's Signature and Date

**PLEASE NOTE, IF YOUR HOME ADDRESS CHANGES AT ANYTIME, PLEASE UPDATE IT IN ESERVICES AND INFORM THE OFFICE OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS. IF YOU ARE RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID, PLEASE CONTACT FINANCIAL AID AND/OR STUDENT ACCOUNTING ABOUT THE STATUS OF YOUR AWARD OR LOAN.**

## Appendix D - On-Campus Agreement



Dear DNP Nursing Students:

### **Re: Mandatory DNP On-Campus Sessions**

It is the VCU School of Nursing's (SON) policy as stated on the SON's website that all DNP students in coursework are required to attend the on-campus immersions which occur at the beginning of each semester. These dates are posted on the SON's website at least one year in advance to allow you to plan your schedule accordingly. This experience is a critical part of your doctoral program and extremely valuable for your success in the program. In addition, you will attend the first day of courses and seminars on various research topics. These sessions are a great opportunity for you to meet faculty, staff, and other doctoral students in the program. The initial on-campus session allows you to obtain your VCU ID card, receive an orientation to library resources at VCU, and take a tour of the VCU School of Nursing building. Staff members from the Information Technology department are onsite at each session to provide technical support and to answer questions about online learning, such as managing blackboard.

Please sign and date below to acknowledge that you understand that your attendance is a required expectation of the program. Please bring this letter with you to the first day of the on-campus experience. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ms. Fonda Neal, DNP and Ph.D. Program Coordinator, at [fneal@vcu.edu](mailto:fneal@vcu.edu) or (804) 828-0836.

Sincerely,

Shelly Smith, DNP, APRN-BC  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems  
Director, DNP Program

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Printed Name

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Signature

---

Date

**Appendix E – Doctoral Student Advisor Change Form**

**SCHOOL OF NURSING  
Doctoral Student Advisor Change Form**

This form must be completed and submitted to Fonda Neal before the change will take effect.

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**Student Name** (sign) **Date**

**Current Advisor(s):**

---

(Print name) (sign) Date  
**Current Advisor**

---

(Print name) (sign) Date  
**Current Co-Advisor (if applicable)**

**Change in Advisor(s):**

---

(Print name) (sign) Date  
**New Advisor**

---

(Print name) (sign) Date  
**New Co-Advisor (if applicable)**

---

(Print name) (sign) Date  
**Doctoral Program Director**

**The current advisor's and co-advisor's (if applicable) signature above is acknowledgement that he/she will no longer mentor this student if there is a change in one or both advisors.**