

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS

College of Nursing and Health • School of Nursing

DNP PROJECT PRECEPTOR HANDBOOK

A Guide for DNP Scholarly Project Preceptors

Welcome and Thank You

Dear DNP Project Preceptor,

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a preceptor for a Doctor of Nursing Practice student during their scholarly project journey. Your expertise, mentorship, and organizational support are essential to the success of our students as they work to translate evidence into practice and contribute to improved patient and system outcomes.

This handbook is designed to provide you with a comprehensive overview of the DNP scholarly project sequence, your role as a preceptor, student expectations, and the resources available to support you throughout this partnership.

We are grateful for your commitment to advancing nursing practice and education.

*Sincerely,
School of Nursing Faculty*

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Overview of the DNP Scholarly Project

The DNP Scholarly Project is the culminating experience of the Doctor of Nursing Practice program at Loyola University New Orleans. The project demonstrates the student's ability to translate evidence into practice, address complex healthcare challenges, and lead quality improvement initiatives within clinical settings.

Purpose of the DNP Scholarly Project

- Address a clinically significant problem identified within a healthcare organization
- Apply evidence-based interventions to improve patient care, safety, quality, or system processes
- Demonstrate leadership, collaboration, and advanced practice competencies
- Contribute to the advancement of nursing practice and healthcare delivery
- Produce outcomes that can inform practice beyond the immediate setting

Three-Course Sequence

The DNP Scholarly Project spans three sequential courses, each requiring **180 practicum hours (3 credit hours)** for a total of **540 practicum hours**. Students work with a Project Chair (faculty advisor) and a Project Preceptor (organizational mentor) throughout all three courses.

NURS 939: DNP Scholarly Project I — Planning and Proposal

- Identify and define the clinical problem or practice issue
- Conduct a comprehensive literature review and evidence synthesis
- Develop a theoretical or conceptual framework to guide the project
- Design the project methodology including setting, participants, and intervention plan
- Create measurement tools and data collection strategies
- Present a comprehensive DNP Scholarly Project proposal for approval

NURS 942: DNP Scholarly Project II — Implementation

- Execute the planned intervention within the healthcare organization
- Demonstrate leadership during project implementation
- Collaborate with diverse stakeholders including staff, administrators, and patients
- Collect data according to the established methodology
- Address ethical considerations and maintain participant confidentiality
- Navigate facilitators and barriers encountered during implementation

NURS 944: DNP Scholarly Project III — Evaluation and Dissemination

- Analyze and interpret project results
- Discuss findings in relation to existing literature and the clinical problem
- Conduct cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis
- Address project implications, strengths, and limitations
- Develop sustainability and dissemination plans
- Present findings to School of Nursing faculty through a poster presentation
- Upload the final comprehensive DNP Scholarly Project paper to Loyola's electronic repository

Preceptor Role and Responsibilities

As a DNP Project Preceptor, you serve as the organizational mentor who supports and guides the implementation of the DNP Scholarly Project at the clinical or practice site. Your role is distinct from the Project Chair (faculty advisor) who oversees the academic components of the project.

Key Responsibilities

Organizational Facilitation

- Facilitate access to organizational resources, staff, and stakeholders necessary for project success
- Help navigate organizational processes, policies, and procedures
- Connect students with key decision-makers and champions for the project
- Assist in identifying and addressing organizational barriers to implementation

Direct Oversight and Mentorship

- Provide oversight for all practicum hours (180 hours per course)
- Meet regularly with the student to discuss progress, challenges, and next steps
- Offer expertise related to the project focus, clinical setting, or organizational context

Constructive Feedback and Guidance

- Deliver constructive feedback on the student's performance, professionalism, and project approach
- Guide the student in applying evidence-based practice within the organizational setting
- Help the student develop leadership and collaborative competencies
- Encourage critical thinking and problem-solving throughout the project

Evaluation Completion

- Complete the Project Preceptor Evaluation of the Student at the end of each course
- Provide honest assessment of the student's strengths and areas for improvement
- Submit evaluations through the PRISM system by the designated deadline

What Preceptors Are NOT Expected to Do

The following responsibilities belong to the student and their faculty advisor — not the preceptor.

- Write or edit the student's scholarly project paper (academic writing is the student's responsibility)
- Conduct literature searches or evidence synthesis (this is part of the academic coursework)
- Provide primary financial resources for the project (students and sites should discuss any costs)
- Replace the Project Chair's role in academic oversight and grading

Preceptor Qualifications

To ensure high-quality mentorship and organizational support, preceptors must meet the following qualifications:

Required Qualifications

- **Current, unrestricted licensure:** Maintain active professional licensure in the jurisdiction where the practicum is conducted
- **Relevant expertise:** Possess knowledge and experience related to the student's project focus area or clinical setting
- **Organizational authority:** Have the organizational standing to facilitate project implementation and provide necessary access
- **Professional standing:** Demonstrate a professional record consistent with serving as a role model for advanced nursing practice

Preferred Qualifications

- **Advanced degree:** A master's or doctoral degree in nursing or a related health profession is preferred
- **Prior preceptorship experience:** Experience mentoring students or professionals in a clinical or organizational setting is beneficial
- **Quality improvement expertise:** Familiarity with quality improvement methodologies, evidence-based practice, or healthcare systems leadership

Student Expectations

DNP students are expected to demonstrate professionalism, initiative, and accountability throughout the practicum experience. As a preceptor, you can expect students to:

Professionalism and Conduct

- Adhere to all organizational policies, procedures, and dress codes
- Maintain confidentiality of patient, staff, and organizational information
- Communicate proactively and respond promptly to emails and messages
- Arrive prepared for all scheduled meetings and practicum activities
- Demonstrate respect for all organizational staff, patients, and stakeholders

Project Management

- Develop and follow a realistic project timeline with clear milestones
- Notify the preceptor and Project Chair promptly if barriers arise
- Document and track practicum hours accurately in PRISM
- Submit all required course assignments and evaluations by designated deadlines
- Seek guidance proactively rather than waiting for problems to escalate

Academic Responsibilities

- Complete all required readings, coursework, and academic assignments independently
- Integrate feedback from both the preceptor and Project Chair
- Apply evidence-based practice principles throughout project implementation
- Present project updates and findings clearly and professionally

Practicum Hours and Documentation

Hour Requirements

Each DNP Scholarly Project course requires **180 practicum hours (3 credit hours)**. Hours are documented and approved through the PRISM system. Students must complete the following to fulfill hour requirements:

- Conduct activities directly related to the DNP Scholarly Project
- Document hours in PRISM within a reasonable timeframe after activities occur
- Obtain preceptor approval for all documented hours
- Maintain a log of activities for review by the Project Chair

PRISM Documentation System

PRISM is the electronic system used to document and verify practicum hours. As a preceptor, you will:

- Receive an email invitation from the student to access PRISM
- Create an account using the link provided in the invitation email
- Review and approve the student's documented practicum hours
- Complete the formal end-of-course student evaluation through PRISM

Technical Support

If you encounter difficulty accessing PRISM or have technical questions, please contact the student's Project Chair or the School of Nursing Practicum Coordinator.

Roles and Communication

Successful DNP project completion depends on clear communication among the student, preceptor, Project Chair, and Practicum Coordinator. Each role carries distinct responsibilities:

Roles Overview

Project Chair (Faculty Advisor)

- Provides academic oversight and direction for the scholarly project
- Grades all course assignments and evaluates academic progress
- Approves the project proposal, methodology, and final paper
- Serves as the liaison between the student and the School of Nursing

Project Preceptor (Organizational Mentor)

- Supports and guides implementation at the clinical or practice site
- Provides expertise and facilitates access to resources
- Helps navigate organizational processes
- Ensures the project is feasible, effective, and aligned with organizational goals

Practicum Coordinator

- Facilitates affiliation agreements between Loyola University and practicum sites
- Ensures compliance with all site-specific requirements
- Serves as a resource for questions about practicum and PRISM logistics

Regular Check-Ins

Regular communication between the student and preceptor is essential. We recommend:

- Weekly or bi-weekly meetings to discuss progress, challenges, and upcoming activities
- Timely review and approval of practicum hours in PRISM
- Open communication via email or phone for urgent questions or concerns
- Flexibility in meeting formats (in-person, virtual, or phone) based on schedules and project needs

When to Contact Faculty

Preceptors should contact the student's Project Chair or the Practicum Coordinator if:

- The student demonstrates unprofessional behavior or ethical concerns
- The student is not meeting practicum hour requirements or course expectations
- Significant organizational barriers threaten project completion
- Clarification is needed about roles, responsibilities, or project scope

- You have questions about the DNP program or preceptor expectations

Evaluation Process

Evaluation is a critical component of the DNP Scholarly Project experience. Both the student and preceptor participate in formal evaluation processes at the end of each course.

Project Preceptor Evaluation of the Student

At the end of each practicum course, preceptors complete a formal evaluation of the student's performance, professionalism, and progress. The evaluation focuses on:

- The student's ability to apply evidence-based practice
- Engagement with organizational stakeholders
- Implementation of project activities
- Achievement of learning objectives
- Professional conduct and communication
- Leadership and collaborative competencies
- Overall readiness to complete the project successfully

Process

The student will send you the evaluation form through PRISM. Once completed, the student submits a screenshot of the completed evaluation to their course assignment in Canvas. Your honest, constructive feedback is invaluable for the student's professional development.

Student Evaluation of the Project Preceptor and Clinical Site

Students also complete an evaluation of the preceptor's guidance and the clinical site's suitability for DNP project implementation. This evaluation includes reflection on:

- The preceptor's accessibility, communication, and contribution to student learning
- The organization's resources, environment, and support for project activities
- Facilitators and barriers encountered at the site

This feedback is used to improve future student-preceptor partnerships and inform site selection decisions. Student evaluations are reviewed by faculty to ensure quality practicum experiences.

Grading

All practicum courses (NURS 939, 942, and 944) are graded on a **Pass/Fail** basis. Students must complete all required assignments, practicum hours, and evaluations to receive a passing grade. The preceptor evaluation contributes to the overall assessment of student performance but does not directly determine the course grade.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much time commitment is required of preceptors?

The time commitment varies based on the student's needs and the complexity of the project. On average, preceptors should expect to spend 1–2 hours per week meeting with the student and providing guidance. Additional time may be needed for initial project planning, addressing implementation challenges, and completing the end-of-course evaluation.

Can a preceptor mentor multiple DNP students?

Yes, preceptors may mentor multiple DNP students, provided they can provide adequate oversight and individualized attention to each student. We recommend limiting the number of concurrent students based on your availability and organizational capacity.

What if the student's project needs to change during implementation?

It is not uncommon for projects to require modifications during implementation due to unforeseen barriers or organizational changes. The student should discuss any significant changes with both you and their Project Chair. Minor adjustments can often be accommodated, while major changes may require additional approvals or timeline extensions.

How do I access the PRISM system?

The student will send you an invitation to the PRISM system via email. Follow the link in the email to create your account and access the student's practicum documentation. If you encounter technical difficulties, contact the Practicum Coordinator for assistance.

What if I am unable to continue as a preceptor midway through a course?

If you are unable to continue serving as a preceptor due to unforeseen circumstances, please notify the student and their Project Chair as soon as possible. The School of Nursing will work with the student to identify an alternative preceptor to ensure continuity of the project.

Is there compensation for serving as a preceptor?

Preceptorship is typically a voluntary educational activity without direct financial compensation. However, some organizations may recognize preceptor contributions through continuing education credits, professional development support, or other acknowledgments. We encourage discussing expectations with your organization.

Can students complete projects at multiple sites?

While most students complete their projects at a single site, some projects may involve multiple settings (for example, comparing interventions across two facilities). Each site requires a separate affiliation agreement and preceptor assignment. The student and faculty will coordinate these arrangements.

What is the difference between a DNP Scholarly Project and traditional nursing research?

DNP Scholarly Projects focus on translating existing evidence into practice to improve patient outcomes, quality, or system processes. They are quality improvement or practice change initiatives rather than original research studies designed to generate new knowledge.

Resources and Contact Information

School of Nursing Website

For additional information about the DNP program, practicum requirements, and forms, visit: cnh.loyno.edu/nursing

Practicum Coordinator

For questions about affiliation agreements, site requirements, or practicum logistics:

- Contact your student's Project Chair or the School of Nursing main office
- Phone: **(504) 865-2464**

PRISM Technical Support

For technical issues with the PRISM system, contact the student's Project Chair or the Practicum Coordinator, who can facilitate support requests.

Student Project Chair

Each student is assigned a Project Chair (faculty advisor) whose contact information is provided directly by the student. The Project Chair is your primary point of contact for questions about the student's academic progress, project scope, or concerns about student performance.

Key Documents and Forms

The following documents are available on the School of Nursing website:

- DNP Practicum Requirements Guide
- Course Syllabi for NURS 939, 942, and 944
- Project Preceptor Evaluation Form
- Affiliation Agreement templates
- Nursing Student Handbook

Appendix: Quick Reference Checklist for Preceptors

This checklist provides a quick reference of key preceptor responsibilities throughout each practicum course.

Timeline	Preceptor Actions
Weeks 1–2	■ Meet with student to establish communication expectations and schedule ■ Review student's project overview and objectives ■ Ensure student has necessary organizational access and resources ■ Accept PRISM invitation and familiarize yourself with the system
Weekly / Bi-Weekly	■ Meet with student to discuss progress and challenges ■ Review and approve practicum hours in PRISM regularly ■ Provide constructive feedback and guidance ■ Facilitate connections with stakeholders as needed ■ Address any implementation barriers or concerns
Mid-Course	■ Assess student's progress toward practicum hour completion ■ Ensure student is on track to meet project objectives ■ Provide informal feedback on strengths and areas for improvement ■ Contact Project Chair if any concerns arise
End of Course	■ Verify all 180 practicum hours are documented and approved in PRISM ■ Complete the Project Preceptor Evaluation of the Student in PRISM ■ Discuss plans for continuation into the next course (if applicable) ■ Provide final feedback and encouragement to the student

Thank You for Your Partnership

On behalf of Loyola University New Orleans School of Nursing, we extend our deepest gratitude for your commitment to mentoring our DNP students. Your expertise, time, and dedication directly contribute to the development of future nursing leaders who will advance evidence-based practice and improve healthcare outcomes.

The partnership between academic institutions and practice settings is essential to preparing highly skilled, practice-ready nurses. Your willingness to serve as a preceptor demonstrates your investment in the future of the nursing profession and the patients we serve.

Should you have any questions or need support throughout the practicum experience, please do not hesitate to reach out to the student's Project Chair or the School of Nursing.

Thank you for your partnership in nursing education and excellence.

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