

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
SCHOOL OF NURSING
ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
FOR THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

TITLE OF POLICY: Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Comprehensive Examination

ORIGINAL DATE: APRIL 2019

LAST REVIEW/REVISION DATE: APRIL 2019

POLICY: The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) comprehensive examination is designed to assess the student's mastery of the general field of doctoral study, the Essentials of Doctoral Education, the depth and breadth of knowledge in their area of concentration, and the ability to critically synthesize and apply the best available evidence to improve clinical outcomes.

The DNP comprehensive examination consists of three components:

Component One (DNP Scholarly Project): Students will complete the DNP culminating scholarly project (hereafter "DNP Project"). The DNP Project will include planning, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination and will demonstrate scholarship, mastery of the subject matter, and a high level of communication skills. See School of Nursing Policy No. 282 for the policy and DNP Project Guidelines for the procedure for the Doctor of Nursing (DNP) Project.

Component Two: Students will complete Component Two of the comprehensive examination to assess mastery of content covered in DNP core courses.

Component Three: Students will take Component Three of the examination to assess mastery of the substantial and complex body of knowledge in their program major/area of concentration.

A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and permission of the student's academic advisor is required to be eligible to sit for Components Two and Three of the comprehensive examination.

In order to complete their course of study and graduate from the DNP Program:

BSN to DNP students must successfully complete all three components of the DNP comprehensive examination. MSN to DNP students pursuing a DNP in the same AROC as their master's degree must successfully complete Components One and Two of the DNP comprehensive examination. MSN to DNP students pursuing the DNP in a different major/AROC from their MSN, and Master's to DNP students who entered the DNP program with a masters in a related field or do not hold required national certification in the major/AROC must successfully complete all three components of the DNP Comprehensive Examination.

Components Two and Three are scheduled and administered by the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee in consultation with faculty in the major/AROCs.

A minimum grade of 80% is required on Components Two and Three of the examination. If a student fails to achieve at 80% on either component on his/her first attempt, the student will be required to retake the component. The advisor will develop a remediation plan that the student will complete prior to repeating the examination. The advisor's permission is required before the examination can be administered a second time. If a student fails to pass Component Two or Three on their second attempt, the director of the major or AROC coordinator, in consultation with the student's advisor, will develop a comprehensive remediation plan that includes a substantial plan of study and/or additional coursework to address the student's deficits on previous attempts to pass the examination. It is expected that remediation prior to taking the examination a third time will most likely extend the student's program of study by at least one term.

Failure to pass Component Two or Three of the examination after the third attempt will result in the inability to complete the DNP degree.

PROCEDURE:

Component One, the DNP Project, can be completed prior to the last term of study with permission of the student's advisor/DNP Project chair. Students should register for NUR 3037 in the term they plan to complete Component One.

Components Two and Three of the examination will be offered each academic term, generally during the first month of the term. Students will complete these components when they have completed all required core or specialty course work or during their last term of study.

An active student Pitt ID card must be presented to the proctor prior to taking Components Two and Three of the examination.

Depending on the major/AROC, students may be asked to print a hard copy of their answers to submit to proctors for grading at the end of the examination. If the examination needs to be printed, students are responsible for the printing fees and must have sufficient funds available on their Pitt ID card at the time.

The DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee will notify major/AROC coordinators/directors and the DNP Director of the date(s) for Components Two and Three of the comprehensive examination two months prior to the examination date. Students will be notified electronically (via their Pitt email) of the examination dates by the staff support person for the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee.

Any student request for specific accommodations related to taking the comprehensive examination must be supported by documentation from Disability Resources and Services (DRS). The student should present the DRS documentation supporting the request to their advisor and major/AROC Director/Coordinator. If the requested accommodation(s) is(are) feasible, the Director/Coordinator will communicate the accommodation(s) to the designate support staff at least 3 weeks in advance so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

The deadline for students to apply to take Components Two and Three of the examination is one month prior to the date(s) of administration. The student's advisor must approve the student's application to take these components of the examination.

Major/AROC directors/coordinators will inform the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee which students will be taking Components Two and Three of the examination. The information submitted to the Committee will include the names and contact information for the students. During any academic term Components Two and Three of the examination will be administered on the same date(s) to all students.

Component One:

The student's DNP Project Committee will determine when the student has satisfactorily completed Component One of the comprehensive examination (the DNP Project). All components of the project must be successfully completed and uploaded into Project Concert including approval of Form 1 (approval of the proposed project), Form 2 (approval of the full project proposal by the DNP Project Committee), proof public presentation of the project, and proof of submission of the manuscript describing the project and its findings. The Chair of the student's DNP Project and his/her advisor will notify the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee and the director of the major or AROC coordinator when the student has successfully completed Component one of the examination.

Component Two:

The questions and criteria used to review and grade students' knowledge related to DNP core courses¹ will be developed by the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee in consultation with faculty teaching the courses. Faculty teaching DNP core courses will be asked to review the questions and grading rubric for their course(s) at least once every year and recommend any needed revisions to the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee.

The DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee will forward the completed Component Two examinations to the respective major/AROC directors/Coordinators for grading. A minimum grade of 80% is required on Components Two of the examination. As appropriate based on the nature of Component Two examination, a blinded review of each exam will be completed by major/AROC faculty. A second (blind) review will be completed of all examinations that do not meet passing criteria upon initial (primary) review. In the event of discordant evaluations between primary and secondary review, a third and final blind review will be conducted. The DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee will assist faculty in securing second or third reviewers with appropriate content area expertise upon the request from the major/AROC director/coordinator.

The major/AROC coordinator will send notification of pass/fail of Component Two of the examination to the student, the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee and the student's advisor.

Component Three

Component Three of the comprehensive examination and the criteria used to review it will be developed by the major/AROC faculty and approved by the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee. Each major/AROC will submit their written examination along with a test plan that maps the content of the written examination to the major/AROC specialty courses to show that the examination reflects the depth and breadth of knowledge in their major/area of concentration to the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee for approval. Any significant revisions in the written examination must be preapproved prior to implementation.

The DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee will forward the completed Component Three examinations to the respective major/AROC directors/Coordinators for grading. A minimum grade of 80% is required on Components Three of the examination. As appropriate based on the nature of Component Three examination, a blinded review of each exam will be completed by major/AROC faculty. A second (blind) review will be completed of all examinations that do not meet passing criteria upon initial (primary) review. In the event of discordant evaluations between primary and secondary review, a third and final blind review will be conducted. The DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee will assist faculty in securing second or third reviewers with appropriate content area expertise upon the request from the major/AROC director/coordinator.

The major/AROC coordinator will send notification of pass/fail of Component Three of the examination to the student, the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee and the student's advisor.

Reporting of DNP Comprehensive Examination Results

Each major/AROC director/coordinator will report the results of Component Two and Three of the comprehensive examination to the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee no later than the last day of the term in which the examination was completed. The results will include a list of the students who completed each component of the examination and, for each student, whether they passed or failed on their first, second or third attempt. The DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee will inform the Associate Dean for SAAR, DNP Program Director, and the Director of Evaluation of the results of the written examination.

Failure to Successfully Complete Any Component of the DNP Comprehensive Examination

Students must successfully complete each component of the DNP Comprehensive Examination to be eligible to graduate from the DNP Program. If the student's DNP Project Committee will determine when he/she has successfully passed Component one of the Examination. A minimum grade of 80% is required on Components Two and Three of the examination. If a student fails to achieve at 80% on either component on his/her first attempt, the advisor will develop a remediation plan that the student must complete prior to repeating the examination. The advisor's permission is required before the examination can be administered a second time. If a student fails to pass Component Two or Three on their second attempt, the director of the major or AROC coordinator/director, in consultation with the student's advisor, will develop a comprehensive remediation plan that includes a substantial plan of study and/or additional coursework to address the student's deficits on previous attempts to pass the examination. It is expected that remediation prior to taking the examination a third time will usually extend the student's program of study by at least one term. A copy of the remediation plan should be submitted to the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee within 5 business days of meeting with the student.

Administration of the DNP Comprehensive Examination to Onsite and Distance Education students

Online and Distance Education students who have major/AROC director/coordinator permission to take the examination off campus will complete Component Two and Three at a testing location approved by the DNP Comprehensive Examination Committee. Students will be notified via their Pitt email of their assigned testing location at least 72-hours prior to the date of the examination.

- An active student Pitt ID card must be presented to the proctor at the examination site.
- Depending on the major/AROC, students may be asked to print a hard copy of their answers to submit to proctors for grading at the end of the examination. If the examination needs to be printed, students are responsible for the printing fees.
- The major/AROC director/coordinator or designee will orient the proctor to the requirements and responsibilities of administering the examination.
- Two weeks prior to the examination date(s), the major/AROC administrator or designee will send the proctor a complete examination packet with all supporting documents, digital storage device, and return-addressed overnight envelope via UPS.

- The major/AROC director/coordinator or designee will be available to the student and proctor on the date(s) of the examination should there be any questions about the examination. Students are not permitted to ask the proctor questions related to the content of the examination.
- Depending on the nature of the exam (e.g., online or written), the completed examination along with all supporting materials will be mailed back to the AROC Coordinator via UPS overnight.

¹ DNP Core Courses: NURSP 2061/2016D Organizational & Management Theory; NURSP 2091/2091D Finance and Economics for Health Care Leaders, NURSP 2075/2075D Introduction to Health Informatics; NUR 3012/3012D Public Policy in Health Care; NUR 3013/3013D Ethics in Healthcare and NUR3099/3099D The Science of Health Care Delivery

Reviewed:

Revised:

Approved by TFO: 4/19