



Doctor of Nursing Practice Capstone Project Guidelines

DNP 797/798

Phase I

The capstone proposal defense to the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor and faculty is scheduled during the final semester of onsite coursework and graded as a part of DNP 611 Capstone Project Seminar 2. The capstone proposal defense is presented to the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor and faculty using the Capstone Proposal Form, which is evaluated as Approved as Presented, Approved with Recommendations, or Not Approved. The evaluation form is filed with the university registrar and is maintained in the student's permanent record. After a successful defense, the DNP student will select an appropriate doctorally-prepared Capstone Clinical Mentor and submit the mentor form for approval by the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor and GPD.

During this final semester of onsite coursework, the DNP student then presents the written project plan as a part of DNP 611 Capstone Project Seminar 2 requirements, which includes a description of the following:

1. Identification of the challenges/problems leading to the proposed project.
2. Description of the project and how the project intervention addresses at least one challenge/problem that influences healthcare for a significant number of persons.
3. Description of how the project fits within an organization's strategic plan with market/risk analysis and justification of the need, feasibility, and sustainability of the proposed project.
4. Projected leadership skills expected of the DNP graduates.
5. Evidence of stakeholder support for the project.
6. Gantt chart timeline including all phases of the project.
7. Projected resources needed to assure project completion including description of budgetary, human resources and technological considerations.
8. An evidence-based interventional proposal.
9. A project evaluation plan including specific objectives and indicators that will be evaluated during the capstone project. This evaluation plan includes evidence-based outcomes.
10. Evidence of completed CITI Course in The Protection of Human Research Subjects (copy of successful completion record) and draft of pertinent IRB application materials.

The Capstone Clinical Mentor should be regularly consulted and provide feedback to the DNP student about the capstone project proposal prior to submitting the written capstone proposal to the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor and faculty.

Phase II

Following a successful proposal defense and upon posting of all grades from the onsite sessions, the student now becomes a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Nursing Practice and is eligible to use the credential DNP(c) as required in order to progress to IRB consideration. The candidate will now revise the written capstone proposal based on feedback received from the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor and return the revised proposal to the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor for final approval. Upon written approval received from the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor, the candidate may then move forward for IRB application. Time frame for approval from the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor and IRB is usually one to three months depending upon the level of review required (exempt, expedited, or full review), scheduled meeting dates of the IRB, and number of revisions required to obtain approval. Each iteration of the IRB application must be reviewed and approved by the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor prior to submission to the IRB and therefore all correspondence between the candidate and IRB must be copied to the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor.

The student is not permitted to begin coursework in DNP 797 and DNP 798 or start recruitment or data collection until written IRB approval has been received and the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor notified.

IRB Process

It is recommended that the DNP Candidate discuss with the DNP Capstone Clinical Mentor, the IRB process. The candidate should share a copy of the application and begin to set goals as to how the candidate and clinical mentor will collaborate. If the clinical mentor does not have experience with formal research and the IRB process, it is recommended that the student seek consulting from persons familiar with research design, statistical analysis, and/or IRB process.

In some situations the DNP Candidate will be required to submit additional IRB applications to a local IRB where the project is taking place. It is essential that the RMUoHP IRB process be completed as the primary IRB process since the University may have additional academic related concerns.

IRB Approval

In accordance with the Belmont Report, all RMUoHP candidates must adhere to ethical standards in conducting research. There are different levels of IRB Approval depending upon the type of project. The three IRB review categories are exempt, expedited, and full review.

Exempt does not mean exempt from IRB review. A study may be considered exempt from completion of selected IRB application forms or processes.

Expedited does not mean “fast-track.” Rather, expedited means that additional IRB application forms may be necessary, therefore requiring more IRB time to review. While more review time is needed when compared to an exempt review, it is less time than a full review would require; hence the term “expedited”.

Full review requires most IRB forms and must be reviewed by the full IRB committee. Logically this is a lengthy process.

The student should not assume that any of these levels of review are less important. Each level is to be considered seriously and students should plan to spend a large amount of their time in this phase following the IRB instructions explicitly. Shortcuts and assumptions add to the student's overall timeline.

Many times, because IRBs are composed of a variety of individuals (including lay persons), methodological and human subject concerns may be raised that were not anticipated by the candidate or draft reviewers. Candidates should respect the need for changes in their projected timelines in order to address issues raised by the IRB.

Phase III

Once written approval from the IRB has been obtained, the DNP Candidate enrolls in DNP 797, Capstone Project and may begin data collection. During this time, the DNP Candidate initiates regular communication with the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor and Capstone Clinical Mentor (monthly updates at a minimum are expected).

Phase IV

Upon completion of the DNP Capstone Project, the DNP Candidate is required to submit in writing, the formal project report. The written report is to be submitted first to the Clinical Capstone Mentor for approval, and then in electronic format to the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor for approval. Once all revisions are complete, the DNP Candidate is scheduled for the DNP Capstone Final Defense. DNP Candidates are not able to graduate from RMUoHP and receive the DNP Degree until the DNP Capstone Project report has been approved and the DNP Candidate has successfully passed the DNP Capstone Final Defense. The following criteria apply to the written report:

1. The report is to be consistent with APA style (5th edition). It is to be formatted in a readable typeface no smaller than 12 pitch font (either Times New Roman or Arial). Exceptions to APA style include only a 1.5 inch left margin and no running head. Page numbers are to be placed at the right upper corner, one inch (1") from the top and one inch (1") from the right edge with the exception of preface pages and title pages.
2. The report should be organized accordingly:
 - A. Title Page/©. This includes the name of the project, student name, and academic credentials, Name of Academic Institutions, and the words, "in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree", a copyright page is to follow.
 - B. Executive Summary. This is no more than 1 page long and inserted following the copyright. The Executive summary should contain summary elements for problem, purpose and scope, goal and objectives, plan, outcomes and results. The executive summary provides an overview of the project and may be single-spaced.
 - C. Acknowledgements. This page should acknowledge the contributions of individuals and/or organizations to the successful completion of the project. Dedications are optional, but would follow acknowledgements.
 - D. Table of Contents (TOC). This page will begin with the preface pages noted in caps and followed by small roman numerals. The section and page number headings will follow with the elements of the body of the manuscript outlined below. It is necessary that formatting be such that the TOC is right justified throughout.

- E. List of Tables. It is necessary to list all tables in a page following the TOC. Similarly, all tables should be labeled throughout the manuscript in appropriate APA style.
- F. List of Figures. It is necessary to list all tables in a page following the List of Tables. Similarly, all figures should be labeled throughout the manuscript in appropriate APA style.
- G. List of Appendices. It is necessary to list all appendices in a page following the List of Figures. Similarly, all appendices should be labeled at the end of the manuscript in appropriate APA style.
- H. Following the body of the manuscript (see outline), the References are placed and then the Appendices in order of reference presentation in the body of the manuscript.
- I. For appropriate pagination and formatting, the (a) preface pages, (b) body of the manuscript, (c) references, and (d) appendices, will be submitted in four (4) separate electronic files.

Following approval from the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor, the written DNP Capstone Project will be reviewed by two RMUoHP readers according to the DNP Capstone Project Final Defense and Written Criteria Form, and evaluated as Approved as Written, Approved with Recommendations, or Not Approved. The evaluation form is filed with the university registrar and is maintained in the student's permanent record.

Phase V

The DNP Capstone Project Final Defense is the concluding activity of the capstone experience within the doctoral curriculum. The final defense is scheduled after the written DNP Capstone Project has been accepted. Students then enroll in DNP 798 Capstone Oral Presentation. If the candidate does not complete the final defense within six months after completion of DNP 797, the DNP candidate will be required to enroll in additional capstone credits.

The final defense provides the DNP Candidate the opportunity to demonstrate his or her expertise in the areas of study. The process serves as an excellent preparation for future professional presentations since podium and poster presentation are valued aspects of professional association and lifelong learning. The following criteria apply to the final defense:

1. The DNP Candidate is responsible for coordination of attendance and expenses in returning to RMUoHP for the final defense. Attendance by the Clinical Capstone Mentor is highly encouraged, but if not possible, every effort should be made to arrange for speaker phone or audiovideo link with the Clinical Capstone Mentor. Candidates are expected to attend all of the onsite DNP Research Day sessions in which they are scheduled for their final defense. Guests and family are also welcome to attend.
2. In general, the oral presentation of the capstone project should last approximately one hour and also follow the DNP Capstone Project Defense and Written Criteria Form.
3. After the DNP Candidate's oral presentation, the DNP Candidate will respond to questions from the floor. The RMUoHP Capstone Advisor will guide the process and invite questions from the audience.
4. The RMUoHP Capstone Advisor and faculty will reach consensus on the outcome of the oral presentation using the DNP Capstone Project Defense and Written Criteria Form. The DNP Candidate's Final Defense will be Approved as Presented, Approved with Recommendations, or Not Approved. The evaluation form is filed with the university

registrar and is maintained in the student's permanent record. If the student is not successful and fails the oral presentation, the student will be given the opportunity to present again with revisions and recommendations from the doctoral committee at a future date approved by the academic dean and graduate program director.

Upon successful passing of the DNP Capstone Oral Presentation (DNP 798), the candidate must make any revisions to the written DNP Capstone Project that may have emerged from the DNP Capstone Project Defense. A final electronic copy of the DNP Capstone Project must be approved in writing by the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor prior to submission for binding. The following criteria apply:

1. Older copies of capstones in RMUoHP holdings may not comply with current guidelines.
2. The original copy of the capstone must be printed one-side only on a minimum of 20-lb. 25 percent rag content thesis bond paper using a good quality laser or inkjet printer in the format prescribed by the RMUoHP DNP Capstone Advisor. All copies must comply with the above criteria.
3. The capstone must be double-spaced with a one and one-half inch left margin and with one-inch margins on the top, bottom, and right sides of the page, using 12-point font size and black ink. Font style should be a standard technical style (e.g., Times New Roman or Arial). A serif font style is easier to read than a sans serif style.
4. Color may be used for charts, graphs, and photographs if done with a good quality color laser printer. Inkjet printers are not preferable for color charts, graphs, and photographs because they do not produce archival quality copies. Any color paper other than white is not acceptable.
5. The page number for the introductory pages (table of contents, acknowledgment page, etc.) is placed at the bottom center inside the 1" margin using small Roman numerals. The page number for the beginning of each chapter is placed at the bottom center. The page numbers throughout the capstone are placed in the upper right hand corner inside the one-inch top and right margins.
6. Titles of major sections of the capstone should be in all caps (e.g., ABSTRACT, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, TABLE OF CONTENTS, LIST OF TABLES, LIST OF FIGURES, LIST OF APPENDICES, etc.). Bolding of the major section titles may be used but must be consistently applied.
7. The TABLE OF CONTENTS page should include a listing of all introductory pages with small Roman numerals, followed by an outline of the body of the manuscript with Arabic numerals. Single or double spacing between dots is acceptable on this page as long as the numbers are right justified. The following example format is to be followed (DS):

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8. The committee approval page must be signed in black ink on original sheets of the same thesis bond paper to be used for printing the capstone (texture and white color varies among vendors). It is best to collect the clinical mentor's signatures on original copies prior to the final defense so that they can then be submitted to RMUoHP for final signatures. When preparing the capstone for delivery to the bindery, this sheet must be placed on top of the title page for each capstone (see DNP Capstone Committee Approval Form and DNP Capstone Bindery Form).

9. The DNP will be responsible for all costs associated with DNP Capstone reproduction and binding. Two copies of the Capstone are shipped to RMUoHP prior to conferral of the degree (one to RMUoHP DNP program and one to RMUoHP Librarian). Degrees are not conferred until the bound capstone has been received and the DNP is cleared through the Business Office, however all candidates once they have successfully defended may participate in the Commencement Exercises and receive their doctoral hood.