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Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program
Student Handbook

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

The faculty, staff, and administration welcome you to the University of Southern Maine (USM) School of Nursing (SON). The School of Nursing administrators, faculty, and staff wish you success in your doctoral studies and are available if you have questions.

This handbook is designed to provide specific information related to the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program. The DNP program provides masters-prepared nurses with opportunities for practice-based doctoral education. The program is taught by the graduate nursing faculty, advanced practice nurses, and faculty from other graduate programs at the University of Southern Maine (USM).

The information in this handbook is as up-to-date and accurate as possible. It is, however, subject to change during the academic year. It is important, therefore, that you have close contact with your advisor and other faculty members. Please note that the information in the Handbook does not replace information in the USM graduate catalog. Follow the blue underlined links for more information about a given topic. Some links connect with PDF files, which require Adobe Acrobat Reader.

The development of the DNP Program was motivated by the increased complexity of today’s health care environment and the national call for improved preparation of nurse leaders in advanced nursing practice.

The DNP Program features a plan of study that:
Builds upon the previous education of masters-prepared nurses currently practicing in a variety of advanced roles (e.g., nurse administrator/manager, nurse educator, clinical nurse specialist, nurse anesthetist, nurse practitioner, nurse midwife, clinical nurse leader, etc.).
Emphasizes leadership in advanced practice, preparation for research utilization/translation of research to practice, doctoral level experiences in evidence-based practice, quality improvement, and organization/systems thinking.
Is structured around the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice, and focuses upon the development of skills and knowledge needed for increasingly complex roles in practice, teaching, and leadership.
Provides five to twelve semesters of doctoral level didactic and clinical coursework utilizing a variety of approaches. These include distance-learning technologies, which facilitate access for students in remote areas while providing opportunities for discussions and clinical experiences with advanced nursing leaders and experts throughout Maine and the nation.
School of Nursing (SON)

History
The School of Nursing’s baccalaureate program was established at the University of Maine - Orono in 1958. The School was relocated to the University of Maine Portland-Gorham (which became the University of Southern Maine in 1978) in 1969 to take advantage of the proximity to larger clinical facilities. In September 1982, the first class was admitted into the Master of Science in nursing program and the Recreation and Leisure Studies program joined the SON in January 1983.

In the fall of 1996, the school was renamed the College of Nursing, and the School of Health Professions was created within the college to provide representation for the non-nursing programs. The Health Sciences program joined in 1996, the Department of Sports Medicine in 1997, and the Radiation Therapy program in September 2000. In 2000, the university system’s board of trustees approved the change in the college’s name to the College of Nursing and Health Professions and the undergraduate nursing program expanded to the Lewiston-Auburn campus in 2001.

In 2010, the University of Southern Maine restructured its colleges so that the school and departments within the College of Nursing and Health Professions are now joined with engineering, science, math, technology, psychology and linguistics. The School of Nursing is now located within the College of Science, Technology, & Health. In 2010, the doctoral nursing program (Doctor of Nursing Practice – DNP) was approved and opened to enrollment in fall 2011.

Mission Statement of the University of Southern Maine
The University of Southern Maine, northern New England’s outstanding public, regional, comprehensive university, is dedicated to providing students with a high-quality, accessible, affordable education. Through its undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs, USM faculty members educate future leaders in the liberal arts and sciences, engineering and technology, health and social services, education, business, law, and public service. Distinguished for their teaching, research, scholarly publication, and creative activity, the faculty are committed to fostering a spirit of critical inquiry and civic participation. USM embraces academic freedom for students, faculty, and staff, and advocates diversity in all aspects of its campus life and academic work. It supports sustainable development, environmental stewardship, and community involvement. As a center for discovery, scholarship, and creativity, USM provides resources for the state, the nation, and the world. This Mission Statement was passed by the USM Faculty Senate on October 3, 2008, and approved by the University of Maine System Board of Trustees on November 15, 2010.

Mission Statement of the School of Nursing
The University of Southern Maine School of Nursing is dedicated to advancing the health and well-being of its community through the education of caring and competent nurses prepared for the challenges of 21st century nursing practice.
Civility Statement

The School of Nursing encourages all students to review our "commitment to civility". The entire statement is available in the USM catalog as well as on the School’s website. As outlined in the statement, “we will not tolerate harassing or discriminatory conduct of any form. Everyone has the responsibility to foster a safe and supportive learning and work environment. This can include any individual asking others to stop disrespectful or abusive speech and or disruptive behavior. Collectively, faculty, staff and students in the School of Nursing are responsible for ensuring a safe and supportive learning and work environment.”

Philosophy Statement of the School of Nursing

We, the faculty, believe that professional and safe nursing practice is at the intersection of clinical excellence and effective relational practice. Relational practice is an outcome-orientated approach to nursing that includes reflective practice, strong communication, and respectful disciplinary, and interprofessional collaboration with a focus on patient and family-centered care.

Baccalaureate nursing education is guided by theory and knowledge from nursing science, the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and the biological sciences. It builds on this background to advance the art and science of nursing using informatics, technology and evidence to address issues of quality and safety. In an effort to deliver compassionate and ethical care, students develop a broad understanding of social structures as they gain awareness and respect for individuals. Nursing students develop an understanding of how systems affect the health and well-being of diverse communities, families, and individuals across the life span. In an ever-changing, complex and global world our graduates will have generalist nursing knowledge, orientation to leadership and a focus on the growing needs of an aging population.

The University of Southern Maine School of Nursing undergraduate nursing program embraces the Maine Nurse Core Competencies (2013), AACN Baccalaureate Essentials (2008) and the University of Southern Maine’s Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes (2011) as foundational to the curriculum.

Our philosophy of teaching nursing is based on the principles outlined in the Carnegie Foundation sponsored research on Educating Nurses (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard and Day, 2010) which advances four essential shifts for effective integration of the three apprenticeships of nursing (knowledge, know-how, and formation). The shifts are defined in Appendix.

Graduate nursing education builds on baccalaureate education and is guided by advanced theory and knowledge from nursing and other sciences. A primary aim of graduate nursing education is to ensure that every student acquires the ability to analyze, synthesize and utilize knowledge to advance the practice of nursing. Graduate education prepares the nurse to engage in scholarly enquiry using research and quality improvement methods, contemporary technology and interprofessional collaboration.


At the University of Southern Maine School of Nursing students, faculty members, practicing nurses and clients work as partners in learning. Students begin from a place of self-awareness with an expectation that deep learning will challenge long-held beliefs, attitudes and responses. Learning begins when students acknowledge, respect and reflect upon past and present experiences. Learning is enhanced by critical engagement in the educational process, by the perception that the task of education is relevant and meaningful and by an expectation of success. Repetition and meaningful feedback allow students to develop insight, new habits and practice patterns. Varied strategies and sequential mastery of content enable learners to develop approaches,
establish connections and verify patterns to make generalizations and discriminations. The shared responsibility for identifying learning needs and evaluating learning experiences enhances self-confidence and the ability to become increasingly self-directed. Successful learning takes place in an environment where learners feel both challenged and supported.

**Doctoral Education in Nursing – Research or Practice Focus**

The DNP is an alternative for doctoral education that is new to Maine and many parts of the United States. Traditionally, doctoral level education in nursing has been specific to the more research and theory based Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Doctor of Nursing Science (DNS, DSN, or DNSc) programs. AACN (2006) provides the following description of the differences between the practice-based DNP and the traditional research focused Ph.D., DNS, or DNSc:

"Research- and practice-focused doctoral programs in nursing share rigorous and demanding expectations, a scholarly approach to the discipline, and a commitment to advancement of the profession. Both are terminal degrees in the discipline, one in practice and one in research. However, there are distinct differences between the two degree programs. For example, practice-focused programs understandably place greater emphasis on practice, and less emphasis on theory, meta-theory and research methodology and statistics than is apparent in research-focused programs."

"Practice-focused doctoral programs are designed to prepare experts in specialized advanced nursing practice. They focus heavily on practice that is innovative and evidence-based, reflecting the application of credible research findings. The two types of doctoral programs differ in their goals and the competencies of their graduates."


**DNP Program Contact Persons**

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DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP) PROGRAM

DNP Program Requirements

The DNP program is approximately five academic semesters in length for full-time students and seven academic semesters in length for part-time students. A total of forty-three (43) credit hours are required for completion of the DNP program; the total credit hours may increase if additional credit hours are needed to complete the capstone project. The number of required residency hours (contact hours) during the doctoral program is a minimum of 500 hours; when added to the clinical hours obtained in the applicants master’s program the total should be a minimum of 1,000 contact hours.

All degree requirements including DNP program credits, transfer credits, and all other program requirements must be completed within six (6) years of matriculation into the DNP program. Under exceptional extenuating circumstances, a student may submit a petition through their advisor to the DNP Program Coordinator requesting an extension of the time limitation through a request for a Leave of Absence (LOA).

DNP Plan of Study

Sample: Full-Time Program Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall I</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUR 700 Genetics and Immunology: Scientific Foundations for Practice*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 702 Informatics Technology*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPH 525 American Health System*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR Graduate Elective (600 or 700)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring I</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUR 701 Ethical Approaches to Practice Dilemmas*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPH 670 Quality Improvement*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 625 Principles of Health Care Finance OR Graduate Elective (600 or 700)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall II</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUR 703 Professional Communication**</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR 704 Models of Care: Transforming the Practice Environment AMS 535 Introduction to Epidemiologic Research*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Spring II</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUR 705 Clinical Residency &amp; Capstone I Graduate Elective (600 or 700)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total credits</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Fall III</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUR 706 Clinical Residency &amp; Capstone II</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total credits</strong></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>GRS 701 Doctoral Continuation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total credits</strong></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

* Prerequisites to NUR 704
** Courses may be taken prior to or concurrent with NUR 704
*** A graduate level statistics course is prerequisite to acceptance.
DNP Student Learning Outcomes

Based on the AACN Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice (2006), five student learning outcomes are expected for the DNP program. These are the ability to:

1. Evaluate scientific underpinnings that contribute to translation of nursing research to improve practice.
2. Evaluate nursing actions that influence health care outcomes for individuals, families, and populations.
3. Use knowledge gained through evaluation of nursing actions that influence health outcomes to improve care delivery, patient outcomes, and systems management.
4. Evaluate evidence pertaining to direct care of patients and management of care for individuals, families, systems, and populations.
5. Translate evidence gained through evaluation of direct care of patients and management of care for individuals, families, systems, and populations to improve and implement health policy.

The complete AACN DNP Essentials document can be obtained at http://www.aacn.nche.edu/publications/position/DNPEssentials.pdf

DNP Course Descriptions

**NUR 700 Genetics and Immunology: Scientific Foundations for Practice**
This course provides an integrated discussion of the vital basic science concepts in the areas of genetics and immunology that underlie advanced nursing practice. Emphasis is placed on those aspects of basic science that are most directly applicable to the understanding of disease processes and advanced nursing practice. In the area of genetics this includes the analysis of genetic information for decision making around disease management and the communication of genetic information to others. In the area of immunology it includes understanding how the immune system contributes to disease and how it can be manipulated as part of disease therapy. Cr. 4.

**NUR 701 Ethical Approaches to Practice Dilemmas**
Examination of selected ethical frameworks and their application to practice are the focus of this course. Exemplars are used to illustrate how the principles of ethics can guide decision making when a clinical, organizational, interprofessional, or research dilemma occurs. Emphasis is on development of the leadership qualities necessary for the implementation of the DNP role. Cr. 3.

**NUR 702 Informatics Technology**
The contributions of health care information to quality assurance and improvement in patient care is the focus of this course. Factors that contribute to the adoption of health care information technologies and the challenges regarding their successful utilization are examined. Health care information technologies used in the assessment of patient outcomes, provider productivity, and health care programs are analyzed. Cr. 3.

**NUR 703 Professional Communication**
Examination of advanced communication skills within various clinical settings, organizations, and communities are the focus of this course. Contemporary views of small group communication theory including Functional Theory, Symbolic Convergence Theory, Structuration Theory and the Naturalistic Paradigm are discussed. Group development, group communication processes, and methods for analyzing group communication are also examined. Interprofessional communication, conflict negotiation, and the value of peer groups are explored. Cr. 3.
NUR 704 Models of Care: Transforming the Practice Environment
The goal of this course is to provide the DNP student with the knowledge and skills necessary to assume a leadership role in transforming healthcare and educational environments. Concepts associated with evidenced-based nursing practice models are introduced and examined. Strategies for creating a culture of evidenced-based practice for individuals, aggregates, and systems are identified. The concepts of information management and translation science are examined and tools to apply evidence to practice are emphasized. Cr. 3.

NUR 705 Clinical Residency & Capstone I
This is the first of two seminar/clinical practicums in the DNP concentration designed to expand the student’s breadth and/or depth of clinical knowledge and skills in an area of practice. Emphasis is on developing and demonstrating leadership expectations within the framework of the DNP role. This is accomplished by application of clinical knowledge to deliver or create, implement or evaluate practice interventions, health delivery systems, and/or clinical teaching. Each residency includes a capstone project. The focus of this project in the first residency is on assessment and either an implementation or intervention project at a group or organizational level. Cr. 6.

NUR 706 Clinical Residency & Capstone II
This is the second of two seminar/clinical practicums in the DNP concentration designed to expand the student’s breadth and/or depth of clinical knowledge and skills in an area of practice. Emphasis is on developing and demonstrating leadership expectations within the framework of the DNP role. This is accomplished by application of clinical knowledge to deliver or create, implement or evaluate practice interventions, health delivery systems, and/or clinical teaching. This residency includes a continuation of the capstone project. The focus of this project in the second residency is on evaluation of the project implemented or intervention delivered in the previous semester and disseminating the knowledge learned. Cr. 6.

GRS 701 Doctoral Continuation Credits
This is a one-credit course that permits doctoral degree candidates registered for less than six credits to retain eligibility for financial aid, university-funded fellowships, scholarships, graduate assistantships, student health insurance, loan deferment, visa compliance, and access to University services, including USM computers, library, and recreational facilities. Requirements include receiving certification of adequate academic progress from the program coordinator and dissertation/capstone chair, and obtaining approval from the Office of Graduate Studies. Cr. 1.

NUR 625 Principles of Health Care Finance
An introduction to health care financial management principles, practices, tools, and models is the focus of this course. The relationships between financial management and quality outcomes will be explored. Information systems and technology will be used to plan, monitor, and evaluate fiscal resources for practice and program initiatives. Cr. 3

MPH 670 Quality Improvement
This course introduces students to the principles and practice of quality improvement in medical care and public health organizations. The course content focuses on describing, measuring, improving, and evaluating the quality of health care for patients and populations. Students develop competencies in identifying and conceptualizing opportunities for quality improvement; selecting and using quality improvement tools and methods; and presenting their work in professional meetings. The theories and concepts of quality measurement, quality improvement implementation, and evaluation are presented. Students become familiar
with a range of commonly used quality improvement tools and methods and gain experience in applying them. Examples and case studies are drawn from medical care providers and public health programs. Cr. 3.

**MPH 525 American Health System**
This course introduces students to the organization, financing, and management of the American health care system and the dynamic changes that are affecting health care organizations as a result of market-based and policy forces. The course develops an understanding of the key elements of health care systems and organizations and the relationship among consumers and purchasers, providers, and the regulatory and policy environment in which the system functions. Students will explore political, policy, and market forces affecting the health care system and will examine the implications of these trends for health care organizations, federal, and state-level policy and health system reform efforts. Cr. 3.

**AMS 535 Introduction to Epidemiologic Research**
This course is intended to give students a basic foundation in principles for the conduct and interpretation of population-based studies of the distribution, etiology, and control of disease. Topics will include randomized experiments, nonrandomized cohort studies, case-control studies, cross-sectional and ecological studies, causal inference, source of bias, and measures of effect. Recent publications from the epidemiologic and general medical literature will be used to illustrate the application of the concepts to specific epidemiologic issues and to develop skills in interpreting quantitative information. Cr. 3.
DNP Capstone Project Proposal – Process Overview

Doctoral education is distinguished by completion of a specific project that demonstrates synthesis of the student’s work and lays the groundwork for future scholarship (AACN 2006). The DNP Capstone Project is a tangible product derived from the practice immersion experience and will be evaluated by a three member DNP Capstone Project Committee. The focus of the project could include direct care issues, interventions, and programs that indirectly influence outcomes for a defined population. It represents an opportunity for the student to investigate a health care issue in a clinical or systems situation. This project can take a number of forms, such as:

- Practice change initiative
- Quality improvement project
- Policy analysis or change
- Design and evaluation of new care delivery model
- Implementation and evaluation of an evidenced-based practice guideline
- Innovative use of technology in clinical practice or in an organization
- Translation of an established intervention into a practice or organization

The student will prepare a written proposal for the project that presents a/an:

- **Overview** of the clinical problem or issue that includes:
  - Brief literature review and summary of the problem
  - Question(s) that reflect(s) what you want to do about the problem/issue
- **Plan** including the purpose and aims of the project, a project time line, and necessary resources
- **Methodology** including the design, sample, mechanism for data generation/collection
- **Procedure** stating the proposed analysis
- **Evaluation** method(s) (e.g., interviews, questionnaire, observation) for the final project

The theme that links the above forms of scholarly experiences is the use of evidence to improve clinical or organizational outcomes. The proposal format will follow the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychogical Association (APA). The proposal will adhere to the guidelines for IRB submission and approval at USM and other institutions as warranted. The student submits a written proposal to the DNP Capstone Project Committee prior to the oral defense of the proposal. The committee will discuss the need for further modifications after completion of the defense and prior to the student beginning the project. The project generally takes one year with the development, implementation, and evaluation of the project occurring over three semesters in conjunction with the practicum immersion experience. Upon completion of the project the following will occur: 1) an oral defense of the project will be presented to the committee; 2) a final written report will be submitted to the committee; 3) a manuscript of the work suitable for publication in a journal or book will be submitted for peer review prior to graduation following the committee acceptance of the final written report, and;

A podium presentation of the results of the capstone project will be delivered during the last semester of the program (NUR 706 or GRS 701). The presentation summarizing the work will last a maximum of ½ hour (including questions). The presentation will be open to the university community and family and friends of the student.

The student's capstone project serves as the primary component of the oral defense of the project proposal for the DNP program. The members of the DNP Capstone Project Committee may ask additional fundamental and
developmental questions, which cover the DNP coursework up to the point of proposal defense, at their discretion. This defense is intended to determine if a student is prepared and qualified to begin work on the capstone project. To be eligible to schedule a Capstone Project Proposal Meeting, a student must have a DNP Capstone Project Committee in place.

The approval/disapproval of the project proposal by the student's DNP Capstone Project Committee will serve as documentation of the student's DNP Proposal Meeting performance. If a student does not receive approval of the project proposal by the committee, the student must correct any deficiencies and meet again with the DNP Capstone Project Committee. Students are allowed to repeat the capstone proposal defense once. If the student fails to receive approval for the capstone project after the second attempt, the student is dismissed from the DNP program.

Once the committee has approved the capstone project proposal, the student is considered to have passed the oral defense. The process for selection of the DNP Capstone Project Chair and DNP Capstone Project Committee and for development and approval of the proposal is included in the capstone project guidelines.

**DNP Capstone Project Guidelines**

**DNP Project Description**
The Capstone Project is a clinically/experientially-oriented, evidence-based project. Upon completion the results of the project will be suitable for publication. These innovative projects are focused on changing practice, policy, and/or influencing outcomes for a defined population. The nature of this project is driven by the fact that this is a practice doctorate. Depending upon the student’s area of emphasis or interest, the capstone project might include the evaluation of an existing program or intervention, an analysis of a health-care policy, an in-depth case study, a gap analysis, a comprehensive systematic review for determination of best practice, the development of a strategic plan for the delivery of healthcare, a program needs assessment with program development and evaluation, the development of an assessment instrument/protocol, or a cost/benefit analysis of program models. Thus, while these projects are to be presented in a format that is suitable for publication, they will not be in a traditional dissertation format. These projects will identify a clinical- or system-related problem and develop an evidence-base response. This could include implementation and evaluation of the response.

Examples of types of DNP Capstone projects that have been completed at other institutions can be found at:

- [http://sn.umdnj.edu/academics/dnp/projects.html](http://sn.umdnj.edu/academics/dnp/projects.html)

**DNP Academic Advisor**
Upon admission to the DNP program, each student will be assigned an academic advisor. The advisor is chosen from full-time doctorally-prepared faculty employed by the School of Nursing. The DNP academic advisor provides the student with general direction and advice on course selection during their tenure in the program. Other faculty members including the coordinator of the DNP program may also represent a resource to the student in this regard. Once the student’s Capstone Committee has been constituted, the Committee Chair will be an additional advising resource for the student. In extenuating circumstances, the student has the right to petition the coordinator of the DNP program to change academic advisors.
DNP Capstone Proposal Defense

Once the DNP Capstone Project proposal is completed (NUR 704) the student will present the written proposal to the Capstone Project Committee for review and schedule a meeting for an oral defense of the proposal. The committee will make recommendations regarding any modifications that need to be completed prior to the student initiating the project (NUR 705). Once the committee has approved the project proposal, it is expected that the project will be completed within the timeframe of the two sequential Clinical Residency & Capstone courses (NUR 705 & NUR 706).

DNP Capstone Project Chair

Upon completion of 6 credits of nursing (NUR) courses, the student should identify her/his DNP Capstone Project chair. The DNP Capstone Project chair may be the student’s academic advisor or another doctorally-prepared SON faculty member. If the DNP Capstone Project chair is not the student’s academic advisor, the academic advisor must be notified by the student that a chair has been chosen. The DNP Capstone Project chair should be a faculty member who has interest in the student’s DNP Capstone Project topic or field.

DNP Capstone Project Committee

After the DNP Capstone Project chair has been identified, the student should meet with the chair to constitute her/his DNP Capstone Project Committee. The DNP Capstone Project Committee should be constituted no later than the second semester of the DNP program or when 9 credits have been completed. The Committee is composed of 3 members, one of whom is the chair. The committee chair is a doctorally-prepared USM-SON faculty member with significant scholarship experience; the second committee member is expected to have expertise in the specific area of the project, and; the third committee member can be identified from either inside or outside the SON and has specialized knowledge and expertise relevant to the DNP Capstone Project. Of the three committee members, two must be doctorally prepared, one of which is the chair, and two must be SON faculty.

IRB Approval Process for Capstone Project

It is the responsibility of the DNP student to seek guidance from his/her project chair regarding the USM Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures for the capstone project. Generally, IRB review and/or approval is required if any human subjects are involved, such as for evaluation of project outcomes. IRB submissions are normally sent to USM and the institution where the data collection (or project) will occur. Generally, IRB approval is sought following the capstone proposal defense when the student’s DNP committee has approved the final proposal; however, projects may require different data collection timing, so the student should work with the Capstone Project Chair. Regardless, IRB approval of the capstone project needs to be finalized prior to progressing into the first Clinical Residency & Capstone course (NUR 705). IRB policies, directions, forms, and examples for consenting are found within each institution's website. All investigators are required to have completed the appropriate CITI on-line training module for Human Subject’s Protection.

DNP Final Capstone Project Defense

A successful final oral defense of the completed capstone project indicates that the student has met all the requirements of the DNP program and has completed a project reflective of doctoral level academic and clinical/experiential work. Approval of the final defense also serves as documentation that the student has met all project expectations and is eligible for graduation, once all academic and clinical/experiential requirements have been met. If a student does not pass the final oral defense, the student must correct any deficiencies and meet again with the DNP Capstone Project Committee. Students are allowed to repeat the final defense once. If the student is unsuccessful a second time, the student will be dismissed from the DNP program.
Students who do not complete the capstone project or do not pass the final defense of the project before completion of DNP program coursework are required to maintain continuous registration. A minimum of one credit of coursework (GRS 701) each semester until the final defense of the capstone is completed and approved by the DNP Capstone Project Committee. Completion of the DNP program must occur within 6 years of matriculation.

**DNP Residency and Requirements**

**DNP Residency**

**Residency Preceptor**

The selection of the residency preceptor must be determined in consultation with the student’s DNP Capstone Project Chair; however it is the student’s responsibility to identify a potential preceptor(s) appropriate for the residency component of the program. No preceptor may hold student status in any USM graduate nursing degree program. Preceptors must hold an advanced degree (master or doctoral) and be expert in the area(s) related to the student’s academic and professional goals.

A minimum of 500 hours must be obtained during the residency experience; the final total will be determined by the number of clinical/experiential hours obtained in the students master’s program. The preceptor must be an expert in the clinical, educational, or administrative area in which the DNP student wishes to develop expertise. The clinical preceptor must hold a position in the organization where he/she can facilitate the DNP student’s access to organizational, personnel, and patient information as applicable.

When possible and practical, the DNP student is encouraged to select a preceptor outside of their current work setting. In large organizations, it might be possible to place the DNP student with a preceptor outside the department or unit where he/she is employed. In this context, it is important that both the preceptor and the student maintain clear boundaries regarding their employment and student status.

**Residency Site Placement**

The site for the residency experience (NUR 705 & NUR 706) is important to the development, implementation, and evaluation of the DNP Capstone Project. DNP students are encouraged to select a residency site that can provide the environment necessary to meet their academic and professional goals. The residency site may be a hospital, a health care system, an insurance company, a public health agency, a school/college of nursing, a research institute, a nonprofit agency, or other appropriate organization. The School of Nursing must have a signed contract with the agency prior to the student beginning their residency experience; therefore the student is strongly encouraged to discuss possible residency sites early in the program of study so delays in placement can be avoided. Following completion of each residency course the following forms will be completed: 1) a student evaluation form completed by both the preceptor and the supervising faculty member; 2) a residency hours form completed by each preceptor which the student is responsible for insuring completion and submitting to the course faculty member; 3) a separate evaluation form of each preceptor and the site placement completed by the student, and; 4) an integrated preceptor and site evaluation form completed by the supervising faculty member. Submission of final course grade is contingent upon receipt from the
The following must be completed prior to the student beginning the first residency course (NUR 705):

- **Course faculty responsibilities:**
  - Confirm that a current and signed affiliation agreement between the SON and agency is on file.
  - Clearly identify the primary and/or secondary preceptor for the student and obtain a current CV/resume for all preceptors and documentation of current licensure and/or certification if appropriate and submit to SON for files.
  - Confirm with the student and preceptor the number of residency hours to be completed during each semester.

- **Student responsibilities:**
  - Obtain approval from the course faculty (NUR 705 and NUR 706) for the site residency and activity before beginning any practicum activity.
  - Provide a list of behavioral objectives for each residency experience.
  - Provide written confirmation from the preceptor regarding the number of residency hours and the estimated dates and times the student will be at the agency.

- **General responsibilities:**
  - A student may not enroll in either of the residency courses and be paid by the agency for time related to course work.
  - If a student is an employee (or has any other formal relationship) of an agency where placed for a residency experience roles must be clearly defined in writing prior to initiation of the placement.
  - A course faculty supervisor must be listed for each student.
  - In order to avoid potential conflict between the site’s expectations regarding levels of productivity related to site objectives and the student’s use of clinical time to meet student objectives, a student may not bill for a service s/he provided while in a student role.

**Residency Hours**

The number of required residency hours (contact hours) during the doctoral program is a minimum of 500; when added to the clinical hours obtained in the applicants master’s program the total should be a minimum of 1,000 contact hours.

**DNP Requirements**

**Background Checks**

All students must pay for and complete a comprehensive background check. In addition, students must sign a disclosure agreement allowing the school to provide access to this background information to our residency affiliates. Affiliates have the right to deny experiential/clinical placement based on criminal background. Denial of placements will stop progression in the doctoral program. Background check information is submitted online at [Criminal background/health and immunization requirements](#). The background check must be completed the semester prior to starting the doctoral residency & capstone course sequence (NUR 705).

**Health Requirements & Immunizations**

Students are to fulfill the University's published Health Policies and Regulations (see [graduate catalog](#)). In addition, students are to comply with the health requirements of the School of Nursing. In order to meet the health requirements of the various clinical facilities and to protect students and clients, tests...
and immunizations are required prior to the start of the first residency & capstone course (NUR 705). Failure to comply with these health and immunization requirements by the stated deadlines will prevent students from moving forward in their nursing education. Visit the health requirements link for the latest information about these policies. Health requirement information must be submitted on-line at Criminal background/health and immunization requirements (pdf). There is a fee associated with this service which must be paid by credit card.

Licensure

Once a student is matriculated into the DNP program they are required to notify the coordinator of the DNP program of any change in status of their RN license or state/national certification (if applicable).
**DNP Capstone Project Process**

In his or her application essay, the student is expected to have identified a clinical issue or problem that may be the focus for a systematic, rigorous, and scholarly project in which the student demonstrates the competencies described in the DNP Essentials (AACN, 2006). The specifics of the project are expected to evolve as the student completes course work since the student will often have the opportunity to develop parts of the project as part of courses. The academic advisor provides initial guidance to the student, helping him or her refine the problem or question. When the student and academic advisor determine that the student has a workable question/project (by the completion of 9 to 10 credits of the DNP program), the student, in consultation with the academic advisor, will identify a Capstone Project Chair. The project is expected to result in a report to the Capstone Committee and at least one publishable paper and one podium presentation within the University and SON.

Summary of Key Events in Capstone Process (detailed below):

1. At completion of 18-19 credits and prior to enrollment in NUR 704, the student has a clear, focused question, has identified a Capstone Chair, and has a list of potential sites for residency placement to explore.
2. While enrolled in NUR 704, the student: constitutes a capstone Committee, prepares a one-page proposal abstract that can be used to discuss placements with possible preceptors; in consultation with Capstone Chair, drafts, submits, and defends a project proposal to the Capstone Committee and completes revisions to proposal prior to enrollment in NUR 705; finalizes residency placement, working with SON faculty and staff to ensure there is a signed clinical contract.
3. While enrolled in NUR 705, the student implements project as part of residency.
4. While enrolled in NUR 706, the student completes the project, prepares project and defense, and other Capstone deliverables, including publication-ready manuscript and project presentation.

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<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Process/Activities</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of six (6) credits and graduate level statistics course.</td>
<td>• In consultation with academic advisor identify doctorally-prepared SON faculty whose interests and/or expertise support project or question(s) of interest</td>
<td>• Identification of potential DNP Capstone Project Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of nine (9) to ten (10) credits and preferably one of the MPH courses.</td>
<td>• When possible and, in consultation with course faculty, use course activities to review literature and refine clinical question/focus • In consultation with academic advisor, think about how the project will help you develop and demonstrate DNP competencies • Explore whether DNP student qualifies for doctoral grants • The student begins identifying possible sites for project implementation</td>
<td>• Draft clinical question(s) • Finalization of DNP Capstone Chair • Identify potential residency sites • Draft plan for approaching residency sites outlined – contact person, clinical contract verification, residency supervisor, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of 18 to 19 credits and</td>
<td>• When possible and, in consultation with course faculty, use course</td>
<td>• Formulate clear question(s)/focus • By the time of pre-registration for</td>
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Approved by DNP Curriculum, Admissions, & Advancement Committee 03.13.12.
Approved by School of Nursing faculty 04.26.12. Update 11.2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior to NUR 704.</th>
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<th>NUR 704, a Capstone Chair is confirmed and possible committee members identified</th>
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<tr>
<td>• In consultation with academic advisor and Capstone Project Chair, student identifies and approaches potential Capstone committee members</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Student works with Capstone Chair, graduate coordinator, and clinical site coordinator to negotiate placement for NUR 704</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrollment in NUR 704.</td>
<td>• Early in the term following completion of 18-19 credits and while enrolled in NUR 704, the student works with the Capstone Chair to constitute DNP Capstone Committee (this will include someone—a site mentor—who will be guiding the student in project implementation within the agency)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Student begins working on project proposal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Student works with SON course faculty and staff to negotiate clinical placement for residency (NUR 704)</td>
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<td>• Student meets with Capstone Chair within the first two weeks of starting NUR 704 to define roles and guide student in process</td>
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<td>• Capstone Committee members are solicited and confirmed by midterm</td>
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<td>• By the mid-term, student prepares draft project proposal, drafts a timeline and deliverables for both project and residency site and submits to Capstone Chair who provides feedback to the student within two weeks. weeks</td>
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<td>• Once project proposal reviewed by the Chair, the student, preceptor(s), and Chair meet to approve the final project proposal before submission to the committee</td>
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<td>• Student submits a detailed, written project proposal (see Capstone Project Format and Guidelines) to Committee by 12th week of semester (NUR 704). This should include clear, measurable objectives for each residency course so that the student and committee can monitor progress— including objectives related to scholarly dissemination of DNP Capstone Project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The student also prepares a one-page project proposal abstract, including role of mentor and residency site and identifies the support/resources needed to implement plan</td>
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</table>
| Enrollment in NUR 705 through NUR 706. | • Upon approval of proposal and enrollment in NUR 705, the student begins process of project implementation as outlined in the proposal (e.g., IRB approvals, if needed; site meetings, coordination etc.—see project guidelines)  
• Student submits progress reports to Capstone Chair and Committee | • Committee reviews proposal  
• Student meets with committee during exam week to “defend” proposal  
• Committee provides written feedback to Capstone Chair, who reviews and collates the feedback prior to sending to the student by end of semester (NUR 704). The Chair is the final arbiter of substantive changes proposed by committee members  
• By the end of the term, a clinical contract is negotiated with the residency site  
• Student meets with site mentor to clarify and document plans for residency (who, what, when, where, how, schedule) and project implementation prior to starting NUR 705  
• Student ensures that he or she is in compliance with all requirements so that placement for NUR 705 can begin  
• **DNP Essentials I, II, III, IV, VI, & VII:**  
  **Student demonstrates scholarly thinking and writing,**  
  understanding of the scientific underpinnings of nursing practice, good planning, project management, organizational, collaboration, and communication skills; discusses potential impact of project on improving the health of Maine residents and “the nation’s health”  
• Using the term-specific objectives outlined in the proposal, the student submits progress reports at these times: Mid-term, and last week of class in NUR 705  
• Student meets with Capstone Committee after mid-term report and at the end of the term to discuss progress |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>During NUR 706</th>
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| • Student meets regularly with site mentor  
• Student submits progress reports to Capstone Chair and Committee three times during the term  
• Continue project implementation and evaluation  
• Draft project report  
• Draft second and third scholarly dissemination deliverables  
• Finalize project report  
• Finalize scholarly deliverables (project report and defense, one publishable manuscript and one peer presentation)  
• Schedule presentation of DNP project results at USM | • DNP Essentials II, III, & VI: Student demonstrates good scholarly thinking, including clinical scholarship, analytic methods, and use/interpretation of relevant research and data to support evidence-based practice; in addition to good planning, project management, organizational, leadership, collaboration, and communication skills; use of information systems/ technology and patient care technology for improvement and transformation of health care  
• Draft of one article for publication AND one peer reviewed presentation—submit to Committee by mid-term  
• Reports due as negotiated with Capstone Chair  
• Student keeps site mentor and Capstone Chair informed—it is especially important to advise of barriers/delays and seek consultation, if needed  
• Student meets at least twice prior to mid-term with Capstone Committee and with Capstone Chair, as needed  
• Two weeks before mid-term, submit project report draft and second scholarly deliverable to Capstone Chair who will review and distribute to Committee  
• One month before the end of the term, submit third deliverable to Chair/Committee  
• Present project results at least two weeks before the end of the term  
• Student is responsible for determining number of and providing copies of the final project and manuscript to committee members and other university entities for archival purposes (i.e., library) |
| GRS 701 (Continuation) | • Student schedules a meeting at least twice a semester with committee members | • DNP Essentials II, IV, V, & VI: Demonstrates organizational and systems leadership/advocacy/collaboration for quality improvement, transformation of health care, and systems thinking; demonstrates understanding of health policy, impacts on care.  
• DNP Essential VIII: Evidence that advanced practice has deepened (if appropriate).  
• Submits a progress report at mid-term and end of term until student is at the same juncture outlined above (for NUR 706)  
• Continues process outlined above for NUR 706  
• Must complete DNP within 6 years |

### Academic and Clinical Progression

When students have accepted admission to the DNP Program they must matriculate in the semester they were accepted or they will be withdrawn from the program.

### Continuous Enrollment

Once matriculated into the DNP program, students must be continuously enrolled in the program unless a written, formal request for a leave of absence has been submitted to and approved by the coordinator of the DNP and Graduate Nursing Programs or the chairperson of the DNP/CAAC. Continuous enrollment requires that every doctoral student must earn at least six credits toward his or her degree every calendar year from the time of the first registration until completion of all requirements for the doctoral degree. If the continuous enrollment policy is not maintained, a letter of withdrawal will be sent to the student, the advisor, and the Office of Graduate Studies from the coordinator of the DNP and Graduate Nursing Programs.

### Leave of Absence

All doctoral students may request a leave of absence. The leave of absence waives the continuous enrollment policy for a period of one calendar year. Note that when a request for a leave of absence is made at midterm, USM’s current grading policies apply. Approval of the leave of absence is the responsibility of the coordinator of the DNP and Graduate Nursing Programs or the chairperson of the DNP/CAAC. Once a decision has been made regarding the leave of absence, a letter will be sent from the coordinator to the student, the advisor, the Office of Graduate Studies, and the registrar. To request a leave of absence, the student must:

- Meet with his or her advisor to discuss the potential impact of the leave of absence on progression
- Collaborate with the advisor and describe the terms of the request
- Complete the USM Leave of Absence (LOA) form
• Submit a written request with the LOA form to the coordinator or chairperson of the DNP/CAAC with a copy to the advisor
• Confer with the coordinator prior to the end of the leave of absence to ensure that the student can register

Inactivation Policy
Student admission, matriculation, and/or progression will be inactivated under the following conditions:
• Failure to maintain continuous enrollment as outlined above
• Absence of written communication with the advisor and/or coordinator regarding matriculation/progression plans (e.g., no request for leave of absence). The School of Nursing will advise the registrar of the student’s inactive status. Students, whose file has been inactive for greater than or equal to one calendar year, may be required to repeat courses or reapply for admission. Students who have been placed on inactive status must meet with the coordinator or the DNP/GCAAC chairperson to determine what requirements must be met to activate registration.

Time Limit
All requirements for the degree must be completed within six years from the date of first matriculation.

Professional Licensure
Students are required to maintain current registered professional nursing licensure and state and national certification in their specialty (if applicable). Students are required to notify the DNP program coordinator of any change in status of their RN license.

New England Regional Student Program
The University of Southern Maine Doctor of Nursing Practice program is a participant in the New England Regional Student Program. For further information contact the Office of Graduate Studies, University of Southern Maine, 96 Falmouth St., Portland, ME 04103, (207) 780-4386.

The DNP Program of the School of Nursing is subject to change at any time without advance notice.
ACADEMIC PROGRAM INFORMATION

Academic Advising

Advising Bulletin
Prior to the enrollment period for fall and spring semesters, the Nursing Student Advising Bulletin is posted. The Nursing Student Advising Bulletin for each fall semester also includes course offerings for the preceding summer. This bulletin offers important information about course requirements and registration each semester.

Advisors
Each student in the DNP program will be assigned an academic advisor after admission into the program. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the academic advisor early in the first semester of coursework. The academic advisor is a doctorally prepared full-time faculty within the School of Nursing. Each semester doctoral students are assigned a registration date by the Registrar’s Office. Students may not register for courses without their advisor’s prior approval. After meeting with the advisor, students receive a PIN which allows self-enrollment in classes via MaineStreet.

Students who do not know who their advisor is may contact Brenda Webster at (207) 780-4802 or look in their “Student Service Center” section of MaineStreet.

There are five purposes for academic advising with the underlying purpose of enhancing student success at USM:

1. Conveying the purposes of the University: includes advice regarding the meaning of higher education, the essence of disciplinary and interdisciplinary study, the reasons for academic requirements, the expected standards of achievement and the spirit and satisfaction of scholarly work.
2. Information Sharing: includes advice about registration, course offerings, areas of faculty interest and expertise, educational opportunities, degree programs and requirements, educational policies and regulations, as well as administrative procedures.
3. Short Range Program Planning: includes advice and consultation regarding program planning, selection of specific courses, adjustments in course loads, and pre-registration.
4. Long Range Planning: includes advice and consultation about educational and professional objectives suited to the student’s demonstrated abilities and interests, as well as identification of the relationship between course programs and occupations.
5. Student Referral: recognizes that the academic advisor cannot meet all student needs, but that specialized campus services are available for advice and consultation complimentary to the knowledge and skill of the advisor.

Responsibilities of the Student (Advisee):

1. Establish time to meet with your advisor at least once a semester. Specific office hours are often posted on your faculty advisor's office door.
2. Obtain a grid outlining the requirements for your nursing program and use it to monitor progress toward fulfilling degree requirements.
3. Plan a suitable schedule of classes before seeing your advisor.
4. Inform your advisor of changes which directly affect your academic performance and educational goals (e.g. finances, job, health, and academic performance, changes in academic and career goals).
5. Discuss academic performance and its implications with your advisor.
6. Follow-up on referrals agreed upon with your advisor.
7. Be familiar with the published rules and regulations of the School of Nursing and the University, the DNP student handbook, and criteria for graduation.

**Responsibilities of the Advisor:**
1. Establish, post, and maintain adequate office hours throughout the term, with particular emphasis given to pre-registration and the add/drop period. Give student phone numbers where you may be reached to arrange appointments.
2. Be knowledgeable about the nursing program, University and degree requirements.
3. Assist student in planning a suitable schedule of classes.
4. Discuss academic performance and its implications with students.
5. Refer student to appropriate resources as necessary.
6. Maintain appropriate records of advising and academic progress.
7. Be a student advocate - based on trust and confidentiality.

**The Advising Network** is a valuable resource for students in planning sessions with their advisor. This website also includes a GPA calculator, graduation planner, and other helpful links to USM services.

**Registration**
See the [Registrar’s home page](#) for information about add/drop periods and registration policies. The following forms are available on the [Registrar’s website](#):

- Academic Forgiveness
- Add Form
- Application for Degree
- Catalog Change Date
- Change of Major
- Course Withdrawal
- Drop Form
- Name and Address Change
- Semester Leave Form
- Transcript Request Form

**Disability Accommodations**
If you need course accommodations because of a disability or injury, please make an appointment with the [Disability Service Center](#) (207) 780-4706 as soon as possible.
DNP Student IDs and Accounts

USM Campus Student Card
Campus Card Services produces and manages the USM card, which serves as the official University of Southern Maine identification card and also provides an array of services, access management, and purchasing privileges. The USM CARD system will continue to be developed with the goal of improving access and services for the safety and convenience of the University community.

If you are on campus, visit the Campus Card Office, Upton Hall, Gorham or Telecommunications 4 Payson Smith, Portland. Open Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm., with extended hours during first week of the semester. You will need to provide identification (license or passport), complete a form, and have your photo taken. Your card will be ready in minutes. If you are an online student and not able to come to campus, you will need to get a different type of USM card that can be used to access the Library. Resources and services for off-campus students are listed under the USM Library Access section below.

University of Maine System Account
(E-mail, logon access to MaineStreet and BlackBoard) If you are new to the University of Maine System (UMS), you will need to activate your System account through the website at http://mail.maine.edu. (Choose Account Activation.) To activate your account, you will need your Student Identification Number and your account Activation Key. If you have difficulty activating your e-mail account or need an Activation Key, please call Tech Support at 1-800-696-4357 or the USM HelpDesk at 1-800-800-4USM x4029 or 207 780-4029, or e-mail To view a video tutorial about how to activate your University e-mail account, visit: http://media.usm.maine.edu/~ctel/tutorials/act_email/act_email.html.

UMS e-mail address
USM uses e-mail as the official and primary means of communication to all of its students, accepted and/or enrolled. In some cases, email may be the only form of communication. Official University-assigned e-mail accounts are created for all accepted and/or enrolled students usually in the form of FirstName.LastName@maine.edu. Students are responsible to read all information sent to them via their University-assigned e-mail account. The University has the right to expect that such communications will be received and read in a timely fashion. It is imperative that students understand that a majority of University information will be communicated to them via their University-assigned e-mail account. Activate your UMS e-mail account at http://mail.maine.edu. The complete Email Communication Policy can be found online at http://usm.maine.edu/doit.

USM Library Access
USM Distance Learning Library Services: http://library.usm.maine.edu/services/distanceed/index.html
(Please note: The USM Card Office will issue library cards by this method if a student is taking ONLY online courses and has no other UMaine system campus affiliation and library card.) The University of Southern Maine Libraries provides a full range of library services to students taking online classes. To access online resources students must have a USM ID card and be registered with the library. It may take several days for the library database to be updated with student information. It is important that students contact the USM Card Office for their ID card early in the semester.
ACADEMIC POLICIES

Refer to the USM 2015-16 Graduate Catalog for comprehensive policy information.

USM Academic Policies

Academic Integrity Policies
Everyone associated with the University of Southern Maine is expected to adhere to the principles of academic integrity central to the academic function of the University. Any breach of academic integrity represents a serious offense. Each student has a responsibility to know the standards of conduct and expectations of academic integrity that apply to academic tasks. Violations of student academic integrity include any actions that attempt to promote or enhance the academic standing of any student by dishonest means. Cheating on an examination, stealing the words or ideas of another (i.e., plagiarism), making statements known to be false or misleading, falsifying the results of one’s research, improperly using library materials or computer files, or altering or forging academic records are examples of violations of this policy that are contrary to the academic purposes for which the University exists. Acts that violate academic integrity disrupt the educational process and are not acceptable.

Evidence of a violation of the academic integrity policy will normally result in disciplinary action. A copy of the complete policy may be obtained from the Office of Community Standards, 125 Upton Hall, Gorham, (207) 780-5242.

Plagiarism
The development of original thinking and intellectual honesty are regarded as central to a graduate education. Although in the pursuit of these goals, students will continually consult existing works, it is expected that they will acknowledge the debt owed to others by citing all sources.

Plagiarism, the use without attribution of language, ideas, or the organization of ideas not one’s own, is a fundamental breach of basic academic principles and is prohibited in all courses. Unless group work is assigned, coursework is normally completed independently. If books, journals, magazines, or any other sources are reviewed and the ideas or language therein used, they must be cited. Where specific guidelines are not given, students should consult a reference source on proper notation.

Evidence of plagiarism will result in a grade of F for the assignment and may, at the discretion of the instructor, lead to an F in the course. In addition, further sanctions (i.e., censure, probation, suspension, or dismissal) may be imposed through the Student Conduct Code.

The case of any student who admits to or is found guilty of a violation of academic integrity will be reviewed by the Student Conduct Code Review Board. The student will be subject to appropriate sanctions, including expulsion from the University. A copy of the USM Student Guide to Academic Integrity and/or a copy of the Student Academic Integrity Policy is available from the Office of Community Standards, 125 Upton Hall, Gorham, (207) 780-5242.

Academic Policies for Graduate Students
Full-time status: Students must register for nine (9) credits per semester in order to achieve full-time status.

Continuous Enrollment Policy
Continuous enrollment requires that every graduate student must either be enrolled in coursework in his/her program (six credits per calendar year required), enrolled in GRS 601, 602, 701, or 702, or be on a formal leave of absence, approved by the student’s program chair and on file with the Office of Graduate Studies. The above listed courses aid students in maintaining continuous enrollment status. Enrollment in any of these courses requires authorization as noted on the approval form and by the Office of Graduate Studies.

Withdrawal
Withdrawal from the University of Southern Maine may be for personal reasons on the part of the student, academic reasons as determined by the program requirements, or by administrative decision.

- **Student Withdrawal** To withdraw from the University the student must submit an official Withdrawal Form to the Registrar’s Office and complete an exit interview with his or her advisor.
- **Academic Withdrawal** If a student has not made satisfactory academic progress toward fulfilling degree requirements (see above), he or she may be withdrawn from the University.
- **Administrative Withdrawal** A student may be withdrawn from a particular graduate program for reasons of a professional nature as determined by the program director or department chair.

Student Appeals and Complaints

**Non-Academic Complaints**
To provide graduate students with assistance in resolving disagreements or complaints of a non-academic nature, the University has designated the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) to respond to student inquiries. The mission of OGS is to provide impartial guidance to students in identifying the nature of their disagreement or complaint. OGS staff will guide students to the appropriate University policy or procedure to utilize in seeking resolution. The academic policies described below are not applicable to student complaints about unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment; however, an OGS representative can advise the student about the University policies and procedures to follow when student complaints of this nature arise.

**Academic Grade Appeal Policy**
The purpose of the academic grade appeal policy is to provide a fair and speedy review of all student appeals of academic grades in graduate/professional programs at the University of Southern Maine; this policy will permit such appeals to be determined in a manner that reflects the interests of both the student and the instructor. The only matters reviewable under this policy are claims of prejudice on the part of an instructor in an academic exercise or activity for which a grade leading to academic credit is awarded, and/or evident and prejudicial error in the administration or grading method used for any paper, examination, performance, or other exercise or activity for which a grade leading to academic credit is awarded, provided that the academic judgment used in determining the merits of the grade to be awarded to such exercise of activity shall not be reviewable.

An appeal under this policy shall be carried out according to the following procedures:
1. The student should present his or her claim, in writing, to the instructor involved and shall seek to have the matter resolved by the instructor. In no event shall there be a right of appeal hereunder for a claim presented to the instructor more than 30 days after a final
grade is posted to the student's record. The instructor must respond within 14 days of receiving the appeal.

2. If the student remains aggrieved by the decision of the instructor under Step 1, he or she may, within 14 days after formal receipt of the instructor's final decision, appeal, in writing, to the chairperson of the department or program director of the college in which the course or other exercise or activity is offered. The chairperson/program director must respond within 14 days of receiving the appeal.

3. If the student remains aggrieved by the decision of the chairperson or program director of the department under Step 2, he or she may, within 14 days after formal receipt of the chairperson’s or program directors final decision, appeal, in writing, to the dean of the college in which the course or other exercise or activity is offered.

4. The dean, after discussion with the student and instructor, may resolve the grievance by agreement or render a decision within 21 days of receipt of the written appeal. The decision may be (a) that the appeal be dismissed, (b) that a grade be changed or the student be allowed an opportunity to retake an examination or other exercise, or (c) that another appropriate remedy be administered.

5. The student or the instructor may, within 14 days of the receipt of the decision of the dean, appeal to the dean of Graduate Studies in writing, stating the reason for the appeal and delivering a copy of the writing to the opposing party and the dean. The opposing party may, within 10 days of receipt of the reasons for appeal, reply in writing to the associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies. The dean of Graduate Studies shall review the original claim, the written decision of the chairperson or program director and dean, and the written reasons for the appeal and reply. The dean of Graduate Studies shall, within 28 days of receipt of the appeal and after reviewing the matter, prepare a written decision which shall uphold the decision of the chairperson, program director, or dean, or prescribe any other appropriate remedy. The dean of Graduate Studies' decision shall be final and not subject to further review. Copies of the decision of the dean of Graduate Studies shall be delivered to the student, the instructor, and the chairperson or program director and dean. The total time for resolution from the first appeal to the final decision shall be less than 120 days. If a faculty member/administrator fails to address the appeal within the specified time frame, the student may take the appeal to the next level.

**Appeals or Dismissal or Withdrawal**

A graduate student has the right to appeal an academic dismissal or withdrawal by their academic program. Such an appeal of an academic dismissal or withdrawal must follow the appeals process as defined by the graduate program’s school or college, which must include a review by the Dean of the College as part of this process. It is the responsibility of the student to demonstrate a compelling case at each step of the appeal process. On appeal, the decision of a graduate program is presumed to be correct and final unless the student presents sufficient facts to establish that the due process was not followed. The question to be considered in the appeal is whether one or more of the following factors improperly entered into the program decision to dismiss or withdrawal of the student into the program: there was arbitrariness, capriciousness, a constitutional or statutory violation (complaints of discrimination are referred to the Office of Equity and Compliance), a material failure to follow procedures, or a substantial departure from accepted academic norms when the program decision was made, or there is new/additional information that could bear on the program decision. Students must be advised of the decision by the Academic Dean of the College in writing within 30 days of the student appeal. Within 14 days following receipt, in writing, of the decision by the dean, the student
may appeal the decision to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The decision of the dean of Graduate Studies shall be rendered within three weeks of a student appeal of academic dismissal or withdrawal and shall be final.

If a student withdraws or is withdrawn from the University during the first two weeks of the semester, there will be no courses or grades recorded. A student withdrawing or being withdrawn after the second week through the eighth week will receive a W grade for each course in which the student was enrolled. A student withdrawing or being withdrawn after the eighth week will receive regular grade designations as determined by the instructor(s). Under unusual circumstances, grades of W can be assigned after the eighth week if approved by the instructor and the director of the program, and with final approval of the associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies.

School of Nursing Doctoral Academic Policies

Program Grade Policies
In the doctoral program, all students must achieve a minimum of a B grade (3.0) for all required courses. The first time a student earns below a B, the course must be retaken successfully (B or above) in order to continue with program progression. A course can only be retaken one time. Unsuccessful completion of the course retaken or of a second course will result in dismissal from the DNP Program and academic withdrawal from the University.

In any semester in which the cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 (B average) the student will be placed on probation. Failure to correct probationary status after one semester will result in dismissal from the DNP Program and academic withdrawal from the University. An incomplete grade (see section below) in a prerequisite course must be satisfied prior to progression to the next sequential course unless an arrangement involving the student and the faculty of both courses has been agreed to in writing. A 3.25 GPA is necessary for graduation. Students may only count 3 credits of B- in an elective toward graduation. A cumulative GPA below 2.67 (B-) in any one semester will result in dismissal from the DNP program and academic withdrawal from the University.

Grade of Incomplete or In Progress
A grade of incomplete (I) is a temporary grade given when the student, because of extraordinary circumstances, has failed to complete course requirements. Incomplete grades must be resolved by the end of the subsequent fall or spring semester. If the incomplete is not resolved by the faculty member, the “I” grade will be converted to an F. The student may not progress into subsequent courses until a satisfactory grade is submitted by the lead instructor. Please refer to the USM graduate catalog SON section for specific progression policies.

To drop all courses, which is considered an official withdrawal from the program, students must contact the Coordinator of the DNP program for more information. Students should discuss adding and dropping courses with their academic advisor. There may be both academic and financial ramifications from withdrawing from classes, as outlined here: http://usm.maine.edu/reg/addingdroppingwithdrawal. Students who must withdraw from all classes for a semester should fill out the Semester Leave Form found at http://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/Office%20of%20the%20Registrar/semesterleave.pdf.
Transfer Credit Policy – Internal & External

Admission Credit
This credit, which has been earned at USM prior to matriculation, must be approved by the DNP admissions committee prior to admission and is subject to the condition that a grade of B or better was received for the coursework. No graduate courses that are older than five years will be accepted for admission credit. The prerequisite graduate course in statistics will not be accepted for admission credit if older than five years at time of admission. A maximum of six credit hours may be approved for admission credit provided a grade of at least a B was earned in each individual course. Exceptions to the maximum credits allowed at time of admission must be approved by the DNP Curriculum, Admission, and Advancement Committee (DNP/CAAC).

Transfer Policy & Credit
This credit, which has been earned at an institution other than USM, must be approved at the time of admission and request for approval included as part of the admissions application. No graduate courses that are older than five years will be accepted for transfer credit. The prerequisite graduate course in statistics will not be accepted for transfer credit if older than five years at time of admission. Up to a total of nine credit hours may be approved as transfer credit provided a grade of at least a B was earned in each individual course. Transfer credits will be noted on the student’s USM transcript and counted toward the student’s degree.

- For each graduate course the student wishes to be considered for transfer credit, the student must:
  - Have completed the course in question no more than five years prior to beginning doctoral study in nursing at USM.
  - Have submitted as part of the application file a transcript that indicates completion of the course under consideration for transfer with a minimum grade of B.
  - Have submitted as part of the application file a complete syllabus (course name & number, course description & objectives, reading lists, etc.), supporting documentation (evaluation information, papers/reports, etc.) and indicated the USM course name and number to be considered as equivalent.
  - The request will be reviewed by the DNP admissions committee and referred to the faculty designee who has expertise in the area of instruction. The faculty designee may ask for additional information from the student, including an official transcript, or consult with the previous instructor or other sources.
  - The designee will then make a recommendation to the DNP admissions committee and the committee members will vote to determine whether the course(s) is/are considered equivalent.
  - The student will be informed of the decision by the chair of DNP admissions committee.
  - The result of the request will be documented in the student’s SON academic file and the appropriate information will be filed in the registrar’s office.
DNP PROGRAM EVALUATION TOOLS

(Available from Capstone Chair)

Student Evaluation Form – completed by faculty & preceptor

Preceptor & Site Evaluation Form – completed by faculty

Preceptor Evaluation Form – completed by student

Residency Site Evaluation Form – completed by student

Capstone Project Evaluation Form – completes by project chair