

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

College of Nursing

Doctor of Nursing Practice Student Handbook

1. Welcome and Purpose

1.1 Welcome to the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program

Welcome to the Doctor of Nursing Practice program in the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga College of Nursing. The DNP program prepares nurses for advanced practice, systems leadership, evidence translation, quality improvement, interprofessional collaboration, population health improvement, and ethical professional leadership. Students enter the program with diverse clinical, leadership, and professional backgrounds. The shared goal of the program is to develop doctoral-prepared nurses who can translate evidence into practice and improve outcomes for patients, families, communities, populations, organizations, and health systems.

The DNP program requires active engagement, professional accountability, intellectual curiosity, clinical judgment, and sustained commitment to scholarly practice. Students are expected to demonstrate graduate-level communication, ethical conduct, respect for diverse perspectives, and progressive development of advanced nursing competencies throughout the program.

1.2 Purpose of the DNP Student Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide DNP-specific guidance regarding academic progression, professional expectations, clinical and practicum learning, simulation, translational project requirements, student support, and program completion. This handbook is intended to supplement, not replace, the UTC Graduate Catalog, UTC Student Handbook, UTC College of Nursing Student Handbook, course syllabi, clinical agency policies, and applicable university policies. Students are responsible for reviewing and following all applicable policies.

1.3 Student Responsibility

Each DNP student is responsible for:

- Maintaining awareness of all academic, clinical, practicum, compliance, and project requirements.
- Reviewing UTC email regularly and responding to faculty, staff, clinical partners, and program leadership in a timely and professional manner.

- Following the approved plan of study.
- Maintaining clinical compliance requirements.
- Meeting all course, clinical, practicum, simulation, and project deadlines.
- Seeking clarification early when requirements are unclear.
- Demonstrating professional behavior in all academic, clinical, simulation, practicum, and community settings.

Failure to read the handbook, course syllabi, or official UTC communication does not excuse a student from program expectations.

1.4 Annual Handbook Acknowledgment

Students may be required to sign an annual acknowledgment confirming that they have received, reviewed, and understand the current DNP Student Handbook. Students are responsible for complying with the version of the handbook and policies in effect during their enrollment. Policies may be updated as required by university, college, accreditation, regulatory, or clinical agency requirements.

2. Program Identity, Mission, and Outcomes

2.1 Relationship to the College of Nursing Mission and Values

The DNP program is grounded in the mission, vision, values, and philosophy of the UTC College of Nursing. The program supports the preparation of advanced nursing professionals who provide safe, evidence-based, equitable, patient-centered, and systems-informed care. DNP students are expected to uphold the values of professional nursing, including integrity, accountability, compassion, collaboration, equity, and lifelong learning.

The link to the College of Nursing Vision, Mission and Core Values can be found here: [Mission, Vision and Values](#)

The link to the College of Nursing Philosophy can be found here: [Philosophy](#)

2.2 Purpose of the DNP Degree

The Doctor of Nursing Practice is a practice-focused doctoral degree. The DNP prepares nurses to translate evidence into practice, lead system change, improve health outcomes, and address complex practice and organizational challenges. The degree emphasizes clinical scholarship, quality improvement, leadership, health policy, population health, informatics, interprofessional collaboration, and advanced nursing practice.

2.3 DNP Program Outcomes

Upon completion of the DNP program, graduates will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Critically seek, integrate, and appraise knowledge from nursing and other disciplines and translate this knowledge into practice approaches that improve health and transform health care. (AACN Essentials Domain 1, 4)
2. Provide compassionate, holistic, evidence-based care to individuals and populations using epidemiological, biostatistical, environmental, and scientific data to improve health outcomes. (AACN Essentials 2,3)
3. Employ individual, organizational, and systems leadership competencies to address current and future health, safety, and other issues, to enhance quality and minimize risk of harm to patients and providers through the use of science. (AACN Essentials 5)
4. Promote intentional collaboration across professions and with care team members, patients, families, communities, and other stakeholders to optimize care, analyze and/or influence proposals for health policy, and the affected communities. (AACN Essentials 6)
5. Respond to and lead effective system change within complex systems of healthcare through the coordination of resources to provide safe, quality, and equitable care to diverse populations. (AACN Essentials 7)
6. Utilize Information and communication technologies and informatic processes to provide high-quality care, gather data, form information to drive decision making, and support professionals as they expand professional knowledge, and improve health care in accordance with best-practice and regulatory standards. (AACN Essentials 8)
7. Formulate and cultivate a sustainable professional nursing identity and accountability that reflects nursing's characteristics and values through practice in a specialized advanced nursing role. Participate in self-reflection and foster personal health, well-being, and support the acquisition of nursing expertise through therapeutic intervention, evidence-based evaluation, and assertion of leadership. (AACN Essentials 9, 10)

2.4 Accreditation

The Doctor of Nursing Practice program and post-graduate APRN certificate programs are accredited by the [Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education](#). The Nurse Anesthesia – Lifespan program is accredited by the [Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs](#). UTC is accredited by the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges](#).

2.5 Professional Standards

DNP students are expected to comply with professional and academic standards, including but not limited to:

- Tennessee Board of Nursing requirements.
- UTC Honor System.
- College of Nursing confidentiality expectations.

- American Nurses Association Code of Ethics.
- Specialty-specific scope and standards.
- Clinical agency policies.
- Course-specific policies as outlined in syllabi.

Students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior that reflects the responsibilities of graduate nursing education and advanced practice preparation.

3. DNP Pathways and Concentrations

3.1 Overview of Program Pathways

The DNP program includes pathways for students entering with different educational and professional backgrounds. Depending on the student's admission pathway and approved plan of study, students may complete coursework and experiences aligned with advanced clinical practice, nurse practitioner preparation, nursing administration systems, post-master's doctoral preparation, or post-graduate certificate preparation.

Current program pathways may include:

- BSN-to-DNP advanced practice programs.
 - Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner.
 - Family Nurse Practitioner - Lifespan.
 - Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner.
 - Nurse Anesthesia- Lifespan.
- Nursing Administration Systems.
- Post-Master's DNP.
- Post-graduate APRN certificate.
 - Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner.
 - Family Nurse Practitioner - Lifespan.
 - Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner.

Students are admitted to a specific pathway or program and must follow the approved plan of study for that pathway. Changes in concentration, progression pattern, or plan of study require formal review and written approval from designated advisors, program directors, and/or assistant Dean.

3.2 BSN-to-DNP Nurse Practitioner Concentrations

Students enrolled in BSN-to-DNP Nurse Practitioner programs (Adult Gerontology Acute Care, Family-Lifespan, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner) complete graduate coursework, clinical practice experiences, simulation, competency validation, and DNP project work that supports preparation for advanced practice and national certification

eligibility. Students are responsible for meeting all didactic, clinical, practicum, population-specific, and certification-related requirements for their concentration.

3.3 Post-Master's DNP

The Post-Master's DNP pathway is designed for master's-prepared nurses seeking doctoral-level preparation in advanced nursing practice, leadership, evidence translation, and systems improvement. Students may enter with prior advanced practice or leadership preparation. A gap analysis or individualized review may be used to determine remaining coursework, practice-hour requirements, and project expectations.

3.4 Nursing Administration Systems

The Nursing Administration Systems pathway prepares nurses for leadership in complex health care organizations and systems. Students develop competencies in organizational leadership, quality and safety, finance, health policy, population health, human resource management, interprofessional collaboration, and systems-level change.

3.5 Nurse Anesthesia-Lifespan

Students in the Nurse Anesthesia-Lifespan program must meet all College of Nursing, DNP, concentration-specific, clinical agency, and accreditation requirements. Due to the specialized nature of nurse anesthesia education, additional policies regarding attendance, clinical case requirements, call, clinical performance, progression, simulation, and certification preparation may be maintained in concentration-specific documents.

3.6 Post-Graduate APRN Certificates

Post-graduate APRN certificate students complete coursework and clinical experiences necessary to meet specialty and population-focused competencies. Certificate students are expected to comply with DNP-level professional, clinical, and academic expectations when enrolled in shared graduate nursing courses or clinical experiences. These certificates include Adult Gerontology Acute Care, Family-Lifespan, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner certificates.

4. Admission, Enrollment, and Onboarding

4.1 Admission Requirements

Students must meet all admission requirements for the DNP program and their selected pathway or concentration. Admission requirements may include, but not limited to, prior nursing degree completion, active licensure, professional experience, academic transcripts, recommendations, goal statements, interviews, or other criteria established by the College of Nursing and Graduate School.

Admission to the DNP program does not guarantee clinical placement, progression, graduation, certification eligibility, or licensure eligibility. Students must continue to meet all academic, professional, clinical, compliance, and regulatory requirements throughout their designated program.

4.2 Licensure Requirements

Students must maintain an active, unencumbered registered nurse license throughout enrollment. Students in APRN or, nursing administrations systems or post-master's pathways must maintain any applicable APRN licensure, certification(s), or role-specific credentials as required by the program, clinical agencies, or state boards of nursing.

Students must notify the appropriate program director immediately if a license or certification is encumbered, suspended, expired, restricted, investigated, or otherwise changed. Failure to maintain required licensure may result in removal from clinical/practicum experiences and may affect progression.

4.3 Criminal Background Check and Drug Screening

Effective June 1, 2006 applicants for initial licensure in Tennessee (not renewal or reinstatement) must obtain a criminal background check. [Title 63-7-115](#) gives the board authority to deny a license based on criminal convictions. Rules 1000-1-.13 (2) lists those convictions for denial of a license and states students are not eligible until five years post-conviction. However, denial of a license is not limited to those listed convictions. Students are not to call the Tennessee Board of Nursing office regarding their eligibility for licensure prior to enrolling in school. The Tennessee Board of Nursing does not make that decision prior to application for licensure and cannot provide students with that information.

Students accepted into the College of Nursing will be required to undergo a Criminal Background Check. An admissions offer can be rescinded based on the results of the criminal background check and/or unprofessional behavior. The faculty reserve the right to make the final determination.

This is the [CON Substance Use Policy](#). This is the [Criminal Background Check Policy](#).

4.4 Health and Clinical Compliance Requirements

Students must maintain all required health and clinical compliance documentation, which may include but is not limited to:

- Core performance standards.
- Criminal background check and drug screen.
- Physical exam within the last 6 months.
- Immunizations or titers demonstrating positive immunity to Hepatitis B, Measles/Mumps/Rubella, Varicella/Tetanus Diphtheria and Pertussis.
- Current CPR/BLS certification.

- ACLS, PALS, or other certifications as required by concentration or site.
- A copy of personal health insurance.
- Proof of professional liability insurance purchased through the University each June while enrolled.
- Annual tuberculosis screening.
- Annual influenza vaccination.
- Annual N95 fit testing.
- HIPAA and OSHA training per site requirements.
- Clinical agency onboarding.
- Other site-specific requirements.

Students may not attend clinical, practicum, simulation, or project-related site activities unless all required compliance documentation is current and approved.

4.5 Orientation

Students are expected to complete all required orientation activities, including university, graduate school, College of Nursing, DNP program, concentration-specific, clinical/practicum, simulation, technology, and project orientations. Orientation may occur before or during the first semester and may be delivered in person, online, or through required learning modules.

4.6 Technology Requirements

DNP students must have reliable access to high-speed internet, a computer capable of supporting online coursework and video conferencing, a webcam, Microsoft Office, secure file storage, and other technology required for course, clinical, simulation, and project activities. Students are responsible for maintaining technology that allows timely participation in learning activities and completion of assignments.

This is the [Acceptable Use IT Policy](#).

4.7 ADA Awareness Statement and Core Performance Standards

The link to the College of Nursing ADA Awareness Statement and Core Performance Standards can be found here: [ADA Awareness Statement and Core Performance Standards](#)

4.8 Photography, Video, and Media Notice

Students may be photographed, video recorded, or otherwise captured during classes, simulation activities, University events, ceremonies, and other College of Nursing or University-sponsored activities. Photographs and recordings may be used by the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and the College of Nursing for legitimate University purposes, including educational materials, publications, websites, social media, news

and communications, recruitment, marketing, and promotion of University programs and activities.

Students who prefer not to have their identifiable image or likeness used for these purposes should notify their Program Director **in writing**. The College of Nursing will make reasonable efforts to honor such requests and to avoid the use of identifiable images of students who have opted out.

This notification is specific to College of Nursing photography and media use and does not replace any University process for restricting the release of directory information or any separate consent that may be required for specific photography, recording, research, or other activities.

5. Advising, Plan of Study, and Communication

5.1 Academic Advising

Each DNP student is assigned an advisor, program director, project chair, or other designated faculty member based on program pathway and stage of progression. The advisor supports academic planning, professional development, progression monitoring, and referral to appropriate resources.

Students are responsible for scheduling advising meetings as required and for communicating proactively when academic, clinical, professional, or personal concerns may affect progression.

5.2 Program of Study

Each student must follow an approved plan of study. The program of study outlines required coursework, sequencing, clinical/practicum experiences, and project-related progression. Students may not alter the plan of study without written approval from the appropriate program director and assistant dean of graduate education.

Courses may have prerequisites, co-requisites, or semester-specific sequencing. Taking courses out of sequence may delay progression, graduation, clinical placement, or certification eligibility.

5.3 Changes to Program of Study

Changes to the program of study may be considered for academic, personal, medical, military, or programmatic reasons. Students requesting a change must meet with the appropriate advisor or program director and obtain written approval. A revised plan of

study does not guarantee course availability, clinical placement, or original graduation timeline.

5.4 Student-Faculty Communication

Official communication occurs through UTC email and approved university learning platforms, currently Canvas. Students are expected to check UTC email regularly and respond professionally and promptly. Communication should reflect graduate-level professionalism and should include appropriate salutation, clear explanation of concern or request, and timely follow-up.

Students should generally attempt to resolve course-specific questions with the course faculty first. If concerns remain unresolved, students should follow the chain of communication (the program director, then Assistant Dean of Graduate Education) established by the College of Nursing and the DNP program.

5.5 Chain of Communication

Students are expected to address questions or concerns at the level closest to the issue whenever possible.

Chain of communication:

1. Course faculty, clinical faculty, or project chair.
2. Program Director.
3. Assistant Dean of Graduate Education.
4. Formal grievance, grade appeal, or dismissal appeal process, when applicable.

Concerns involving safety, discrimination, harassment, professional misconduct, or urgent clinical matters should be reported immediately through the appropriate university, college, or clinical agency process.

The formal Student Grievance process and form can be found [here](#).

6. Academic Standards, Progression, and Grading

6.1 Graduate Academic Standards

DNP students must meet all UTC Graduate School, College of Nursing, and DNP program academic standards. Students are expected to maintain graduate-level academic performance, professional behavior, and satisfactory progress toward degree completion.

6.2 Course Grades and Progression

The grading scale for the DNP program is based on the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga College of Nursing Graduate Program standard and is as follows:

- 92-100% = A (work that is of distinctly superior quality and quantity and is consistently outstanding; unusual evidence of enthusiasm, initiative, thoroughness, and originality)
- 84-91% = B (work that exceeds expectations for satisfactory performance and is occasionally outstanding)
- 78-83% = C (does not meet the minimum essentials of an assignments, task, course for graduate work in the College of Nursing)
- 70-77% = D (does not meet minimum grading criteria for graduate work in the School of Nursing)
- Less than 70% = F (unqualified failure)

All grades will be recorded to two (2) decimal places. At the end of the semester, the final grade will be calculated to 2 decimal places and rounded mathematically as follows:

Less than 0.50 – round down to the next whole number. Ex: 91.49 = 91

0.50 or greater – round up to the next whole number. Ex: 91.50 = 92

Students who earn a grade of “C” or lower, or a “No Credit” in a course, are required to repeat the course when it is next offered. A grade of “C” or lower or “No Credit” may affect progression, clinical placement, certification eligibility, financial aid, and expected graduation timeline.

A DNP student who earns a “C” or lower or “No Credit” in two courses during enrollment may be considered for dismissal from the College of Nursing.

Please see [Academic Policies for Graduate Students](#) Continuation Standards, in the UTC Graduate Catalog.

Students who are dismissed from the program may appeal the decision. Please see sections entitled Program Dismissal Procedure and Student Appeal Process in [Academic Policies for Graduate Students](#) for more information.

6.3 Repeating a Course

When a course must be repeated, the student must meet with the appropriate advisor or program director to develop a revised plan of study. Course availability, clinical placement, and progression are not guaranteed outside the standard sequence. Students may not progress into courses for which the failed or no-credit course is a prerequisite or co-requisite unless approved by the program director and the Assistant Dean for Graduate Education.

6.4 Clinical or Practicum Failure

Clinical, practicum, simulation, and project-related courses may include a grade, satisfactory/unsatisfactory or credit/no credit assignment. Unsafe practice, unprofessional behavior, failure to meet clinical objectives, inaccurate documentation, failure to complete required hours, or removal from a clinical site may result in course failure or no credit.

6.5 Academic Probation and Remediation

Students may be referred for academic or professional remediation when performance concerns are identified. Remediation may address academic knowledge, clinical judgment, writing, professionalism, documentation, communication, clinical performance, simulation performance, or project progression.

A remediation plan will include:

- The area of concern.
- Specific expected outcomes.
- Required activities.
- Timeline for completion.
- Method of evaluation.
- Consequences if the plan is not completed successfully.

Remediation is intended to support student success but does not guarantee progression.

6.6 Grade Appeal

Students who believe a final course grade was assigned unfairly, arbitrarily, maliciously, or on non-academic grounds must follow the official UTC and College of Nursing grade appeal process. Students appealing a failing grade may not register for subsequent nursing courses while the grade appeal is pending.

Students seeking to appeal a grade in a nursing course must adhere to the university's official procedure as detailed in [Grade Appeal Process](#) in the Graduate Catalog for DNP students.

6.7 Program Dismissal

A student may be dismissed from the DNP program for academic failure, repeated course failure/no credit, a second withdrawal, unsafe practice, unprofessional conduct, negligent habits, violation of the UTC Honor Code, violation of professional standards, or other causes identified by university, college, or program policy.

Students may be dismissed from the College of Nursing Graduate Program when:

- They earn a second course grade of "C", "D", "F", or "NC" and/or
- They withdraw from the nursing program more than one time (students are only allowed

one withdrawal from the program for personal/academic reasons) and/or

- They are found guilty of unprofessional conduct, negligent habits, unsafe behaviors, or other cause as may be specified in the Tennessee Board of Nursing Rules and Regulations of Registered Nurses or the ANA Code of Ethics and/or
- They are found guilty of a violation of the UTC Honor Code.

Dismissal for Reasons Other Than Grades

When a faculty member determines that a student has exhibited either unprofessional conduct, negligent habits, unsafe behavior, or other cause as may be specified in the Tennessee Board of Nursing Rules and Regulations of Registered Nurses and/or violated the ANA Code of Ethics, that faculty member notifies the appropriate Graduate Program Director who calls the appropriate sub-committee meeting within 3 business days to discuss the student's behavior. If the sub-committee deems that the student's behavior justifies dismissal from the CON, the Program Director will notify the CON Graduate Committee Chair via official UTC email within 3 business days of the decision. A copy of this notification will be kept in the student's file in the CON. After the Graduate Committee Chair is notified, they will send a notification of the decision to the Assistant Dean of Graduate Education of the CON via official UTC email within 3 business days.

Students dismissed from the program may not register for subsequent nursing courses while a grade appeal or dismissal appeal is pending. Students must follow the official College of Nursing and Graduate School appeal process and timelines.

Dismissal Process For Grades

When a graduate student earns a course grade of "C", "D", "F", or "NC", in a graduate nursing course, the course faculty will notify the College of Nursing (CON) Graduate Committee Chair via official UTC email within 3 business days. A copy of this notification will be kept in the student's file in the CON. After the Chair is notified of a second earned grade of "C", "D", "F", or "NC", they will send a notification to the Assistant Dean of Graduate Programs of the CON via UTC email within 3 business days. The Chair of the Graduate Committee will notify the student of their dismissal from the CON via UTC email within 3 business days of official posting of grades for the semester.

Please see [Academic Policies for Graduate Students](#) Continuation Standards, in the UTC Graduate Catalog.

Appeal Procedure from the Graduate Program

If a student elects to appeal a course grade and the original grade is upheld following the appeal, the student will be dismissed from the CON.

Students dismissed from the CON may not register for any subsequent nursing courses while the grade appeal or appeal for dismissal is pending. Any concentration that utilizes partial terms for select nursing courses will adhere to the following process. If a student

earns a second failing grade in a nursing course during partial term 1, they will be dismissed from the College of Nursing at the conclusion of that term. Upon dismissal, the student must immediately withdraw from all nursing courses scheduled for the remainder of the semester which may include Partial Term 2.

Upon dismissal, the student has 3 business days to submit a program dismissal appeal form to the Graduate Committee.

Students who wish to appeal program dismissal must submit the CON Appeal of Program Dismissal form to the Graduate Committee as indicated above within 3 business days of receiving official UTC email notification of CON dismissal. The Graduate Committee Chair will call a meeting upon receiving the appeal within 3 business days. The Chair will notify the student by official UTC email of the committee decision within 24 hours of the meeting. If the student appeal is denied and the student wishes to continue the appeal process, s/he may request the Chair forward all materials and the College of Nursing Appeal of Program Dismissal form to the Assistant Dean of Graduate Programs of the CON. This request must be within 3 business days of receiving UTC email notification of the Committee's decision. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Education will make a decision and notify the student and the Graduate Committee Chair via UTC email within 24 hours of the request explaining the basis for the decision.

The student or the committee may appeal the Assistant Dean's decision to the Dean of the College of Nursing in writing within 3 business days following receipt via UTC email of notification of the Assistant Dean's decision. The written document to the Dean must explain the basis for the appeal. The student or the Assistant Dean of the CON may appeal the decision of the Dean to the Chancellor in writing within 3 business days following notification via official UTC email of the Dean's decision. The written document to the Chancellor must explain the basis for the appeal. If an appeal for dismissal is made to the Chancellor, the Dean will forward all relevant documentation pertinent to the appeal to the Chancellor. The decision of the Chancellor shall be final and all involved parties will receive official UTC email notification.

If the student is reinstated in the program at the conclusion of the program dismissal appeal process, the student's program completion date will be extended, as appropriate and necessary.

Students are responsible for initiating the appeal processes for grade and program dismissal appeals. Please see sections entitled Program Dismissal Procedure and Student Appeal Process in [Academic Policies for Graduate Students](#) for more information.

6.8 Withdrawal, Leave of Absence, and Return

Students considering withdrawal or leave of absence should consult with the appropriate advisor or program director before withdrawing from any course. Withdrawal or leave may affect course sequencing, clinical placement, financial aid, progression, certification eligibility, and graduation timeline.

Students returning from leave may be required to:

- Submit a return request.
 - Reapply to the UTC Graduate School (fee is waived for readmission).
 - Provide medical clearance if applicable.
 - Update clinical compliance requirements.
 - Complete a revised plan of study.
 - Complete refresher, skills, simulation, or competency activities.
 - Repeat coursework if content currency or program requirements have changed.
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7. Professional Conduct and Academic Integrity

7.1 Professional Behavior

DNP students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior in all settings. Professional behavior includes honesty, accountability, preparation, punctuality, respectful communication, safe practice, responsiveness, confidentiality, cultural humility, and appropriate use of professional judgment.

Unprofessional behavior may include, but is not limited to:

- Unsafe clinical or practicum practice.
 - Failure to prepare for clinical, practicum, simulation, or class.
 - Falsification of records, clinical hours, assignments, logs, or project data.
 - Inappropriate communication with faculty, peers, preceptors, staff, patients, families, or clinical partners.
 - Breach of confidentiality.
 - Violation of clinical agency policy.
 - Impaired practice.
 - Academic dishonesty.
 - Failure to respond to official communication.
 - Misrepresentation of student role, credentials, or clinical authority.
- [Tennessee Board of Nursing Requirements](#)
 - [UTC Honor System](#)
 - [Confidentiality Policy](#)

- [Nursing Code of Ethics](#) -- All faculty and students abide by the American Nurses Association (ANA) code of ethics. Individual Course Policies -- Individual course policies are printed in course syllabi given to students or accessible on Canvas at the beginning of each semester.

7.2 Academic Integrity

Students must comply with the UTC Honor System and all course-specific academic integrity expectations. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of clinical or project documentation, fabrication of citations or data, misrepresentation of work, and unauthorized use of resources.

Students are responsible for producing original work and accurately citing sources. Academic integrity expectations apply to all papers, exams, quizzes, discussion boards, clinical documentation, logs, simulations, project work, presentations, and scholarly products.

7.3 Confidentiality and HIPAA

Students must maintain confidentiality of patient, family, student, faculty, preceptor, agency, and project information. Protected health information, identifiable patient details, student records, and confidential agency information may not be disclosed in papers, presentations, discussion boards, social media, AI tools, or informal communication.

Clinical and project examples must be de-identified according to HIPAA, clinical agency, and university expectations.

7.4 Social Media

Students must comply with the College of Nursing [Social Media Policy](#). Students may not post patient information, clinical experiences, images, videos, agency information, or confidential educational content on social media. Students should maintain professional boundaries and recognize that public online behavior may reflect on the student, program, college, university, and nursing profession.

7.5 Artificial Intelligence Use

Artificial intelligence tools may be used only when permitted by course faculty and consistent with university, college, and course policies. Acceptable use may include brainstorming, outlining, editing, study support, and organization when authorized.

Students may not use AI tools to:

- Enter patient identifiers, protected health information, student records, or confidential clinical agency information.

- Fabricate clinical logs, patient encounters, citations, project data, assignments, or competency evidence.
- Replace required clinical reasoning, diagnostic reasoning, writing development, project analysis, or scholarly work.
- Misrepresent AI-generated content as original work when disclosure is required.

Students remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, citations, ethical use, and professional appropriateness of all submitted work. Each syllabus will outline which of the university's AI policies will be used within the class.

8. Clinical, Practicum, and Practice Experiences

8.1 Purpose of Practice Experiences

DNP practice experiences support the development of advanced nursing competencies, clinical judgment, leadership, systems thinking, interprofessional collaboration, evidence translation, and population-focused care. Practice experiences may include direct patient care, indirect care, systems leadership, quality improvement, simulation, project planning, project implementation, and evaluation activities.

8.2 Practice Hours

Students must complete all required clinical and practice hours for their degree, concentration, certification eligibility, and DNP project requirements. Hours must be documented in the approved tracking system and verified according to program policy.

Students are responsible for accurate and timely documentation of all hours. Falsification or misrepresentation of hours may result in course failure, disciplinary action, and/or dismissal.

8.3 Clinical and Practicum Site Approval

Students may not begin clinical or practicum hours until the site, preceptor, affiliation agreement, compliance documentation, and course approval are complete. Site approval is not guaranteed and may depend on agency requirements, state authorization, preceptor qualifications, faculty approval, and program needs. Clinical faculty and the Program Director will provide the necessary information regarding securing clinical rotations. All rotations must have an active contract in place prior to beginning any on-site activity. Student must have site requests to their advisor by the specified timeline to qualify for placement.

8.4 Preceptor Qualifications

Preceptors must meet program, specialty, certification, and clinical agency requirements. Preceptors should have appropriate licensure, certification, experience, and role

preparation to support the student's learning objectives. The program reserves the right to approve or deny preceptors based on educational fit, regulatory requirements, or concerns about student learning or safety.

8.5 Student Role in Clinical and Practicum Settings

Students function in the student role during all clinical and practicum experiences. Students may not represent themselves as independent providers, employees, or licensed practitioners acting outside the student role. Students must follow preceptor direction, faculty guidance, scope of practice, institutional policy, and applicable laws.

Paid employment hours may not be counted as clinical or practicum hours unless explicitly approved and clearly differentiated from employee responsibilities.

8.6 Clinical Attendance

Attendance at clinical, practicum, laboratory, simulation, intensives, and competency experiences is required. Tardiness, absence, lack of preparation, inappropriate attire, noncompliance, or unprofessional behavior may result in removal from the learning experience and may affect progression. All planned clinicals should be placed into the Typhon scheduler as soon as they are planned to ensure that faculty can identify student locations at all times.

8.7 Clinical Incidents and Safety Events

Students must report clinical incidents, exposures, injuries, medication errors, near misses, safety events, or patient-care concerns immediately to the preceptor, clinical faculty, and appropriate agency personnel. Students must complete all required agency, college, and university documentation.

Please use this [Clinical Incidence Form](#).

8.8 Clinical Site Removal

A student may be removed from a clinical or practicum site for unsafe practice, unprofessional behavior, failure to follow site policy, lack of preparation, compliance deficiencies, patient safety concerns, or at the request of the clinical agency. Removal from a site may result in course failure, remediation, delayed progression, or dismissal.

9. Simulation, Skills, and Competency Validation

9.1 Purpose of Simulation

Simulation-based learning experiences provide structured opportunities for students to develop, apply, demonstrate, and evaluate advanced nursing competencies within a safe and supportive learning environment. Experiences may address clinical and diagnostic

reasoning, communication, procedural skills, crisis management, interprofessional teamwork, leadership, professional role development, and remediation.

Each simulation-based learning experience will include defined learning objectives appropriate to the course, student level, and expected scope of practice.

9.2 Attendance, Preparation, and Professional Participation

Students are expected to attend all required simulation, skills, intensive, standardized patient, and competency validation experiences. Students must arrive on time, appropriately dressed, and prepared to participate.

During the experience, students are expected to:

- Engage actively in the simulation and debriefing.
- Communicate clearly and professionally.
- Delegate and collaborate appropriately.
- Function within their educational role and expected scope of practice.
- Treat peers, faculty, staff, standardized patients, and other participants with professionalism and respect.
- Follow all safety, equipment-use, infection-prevention, and facility expectations.

Absence, tardiness, inadequate preparation, failure to participate, unprofessional conduct, or unsafe performance may result in remediation, reassessment, or other course-related consequences and may affect progression.

9.3 Pre-briefing and Orientation

Students will receive a pre-briefing before each simulation-based learning experience. The pre-briefing may include:

- The purpose and learning objectives of the experience.
- Participant roles and role expectations.
- The expected level of communication, collaboration, and clinical decision-making.
- The duration, general structure, and completion criteria of the activity.
- Orientation to the simulation environment, equipment, technology, and available resources.
- Instructions for working within the limitations of simulation fidelity.
- Whether the activity is formative or summative and whether it contributes to the course grade.
- Expectations regarding recording, confidentiality, psychological safety, and debriefing.
- Any safety procedures or methods for pausing the experience when needed.

Students are responsible for asking questions during the pre-briefing if expectations, roles, equipment, or evaluation criteria are unclear.

9.4 Psychological Safety and the Simulation Learning Agreement

Simulation is designed to support learning, reflection, professional development, and improvement. Students are expected to enter the experience with a nonjudgmental attitude, engage with the simulated environment as if the situation were real, and remain open to learning from peers and faculty.

The program operates from the assumption that participants are intelligent, capable, care about doing their best, and want to improve. Mistakes may occur during simulation and should be approached as opportunities for reflection and learning while maintaining established competency and patient-safety expectations.

Simulation experiences may produce stress, anxiety, embarrassment, uncertainty, or other emotional responses. Students are encouraged to speak up, ask questions, take thoughtful learning risks, and support one another with professionalism and respect. A student or participant may request that an experience be paused when an immediate physical or psychological safety concern arises. Faculty will determine the appropriate response, including whether the activity should be paused, modified, or discontinued.

9.5 Confidentiality, Privacy, and Recording

Students may not disclose simulation scenarios, participant performance, peer feedback, debriefing discussions, recordings, evaluation materials, or other protected details outside the authorized learning environment. This expectation supports psychological safety and preserves equitable learning opportunities for future participants.

Students may not make personal audio, video, photographic, or screen recordings during simulation or debriefing activities.

When an experience is recorded, students will be informed during the prebriefing. Recordings may be used for authorized educational, evaluation, faculty-development, or quality-improvement purposes and will be accessed, stored, and managed in accordance with College of Nursing and University requirements. Confidentiality does not prevent disclosure when reporting is required by law, University policy, or an immediate safety concern.

9.6 Debriefing and Reflective Learning

Students are expected to participate actively and professionally in facilitated debriefing following simulation-based learning experiences. Debriefing may include discussion of participant reactions, the clinical situation, actions and decisions, communication,

teamwork, areas of strength, opportunities for improvement, and application of learning to future practice.

Debriefing conversations are part of the confidential learning environment. Students should provide feedback respectfully, reflect honestly on their performance, and identify relevant takeaways for future clinical practice.

9.7 Competency Validation, Remediation, and Reassessment

Courses, concentrations, or program components may require skills validation, simulation performance, procedural competency, standardized patient encounters, or other demonstrations of readiness. Students will be informed of the applicable performance criteria and whether an experience is formative, summative, graded, or required for progression.

Students must meet established competency and safety criteria to progress when such validation is required. A student who does not meet expectations may be required to complete additional preparation, remediation, repeat practice, or reassessment. Successful completion of remediation does not automatically replace or remove other course consequences unless specifically stated in the applicable syllabus or program policy.

10. DNP Translational Project

10.1 Purpose of the Translational Project

The DNP Translational Project is an in-depth, integrative scholarly experience demonstrating the student's ability to use evidence to improve practice or outcomes for patients, families, populations, organizations, or health systems. The project translates current research into a practice-related product and requires design, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination.

10.2 Project Topic Selection

Students should select a project topic that is significant, feasible, evidence-based, measurable, and aligned with DNP program outcomes. Projects should address a meaningful practice problem and should be appropriate to the student's role, pathway, and setting.

A suitable project should include:

- A clearly defined practice problem.
- A specific population, setting, or system.

- Evidence supporting the proposed intervention or change.
- Measurable outcomes.
- Site or stakeholder support.
- Feasibility within the program timeline.
- Ethical and regulatory appropriateness.

10.3 Project Chair and Committee

A project chair will be assigned to the student and may also serve as the student's advisor. The chair must meet Graduate School requirements for graduate faculty status. The student, in collaboration with the chair, will form a translational project committee. The committee includes the chair and a community or practice member. Additional members may serve as non-voting members when appropriate.

10.4 Prospectus

The prospectus is the first formal step in the DNP project process. It demonstrates that the topic and initial approach are adequate to proceed with proposal development. The prospectus should include the practice problem, background, significance, preliminary evidence, proposed setting, potential intervention, anticipated outcomes, and feasibility considerations.

10.5 Project Proposal and Qualifying Examination

The DNP Qualifying Examination is the successful defense of the DNP Translational Project Proposal. The proposal defense allows faculty to determine whether the student is prepared and competent to implement the proposed project.

To be eligible to defend the proposal, the student must meet program requirements, including completion of required coursework and project milestones. The student must receive majority approval or conditional approval to progress with implementation.

10.6 Regulatory Review and Site Approval

Students may not begin project implementation or data collection until all required approvals are obtained. Depending on the project, approvals may include:

- Project chair approval.
- Committee approval.
- Site approval.
- Institutional Review Board review.
- Quality improvement determination.
- Data-use agreement.
- Agency approval.
- Compliance or privacy review.

Beginning project activities before approval may result in project delay, required revision, or inability to use collected data.

10.7 Project Implementation and Evaluation

Students are responsible for implementing the approved project as designed or obtaining approval for modifications before changes are made. Students must collect, manage, analyze, and report data ethically and accurately. Project evaluation should align with the approved outcomes and methods.

10.8 Final Defense and Dissemination

At the completion of the program, the student will defend the completed evidence-based translational project. Final project requirements may include a written paper, presentation, poster, executive summary, scholarly product, repository submission, or other dissemination activity as determined by the program.

10.9 Project Delays

Students who experience project delays, site loss, implementation barriers, data limitations, committee changes, or timeline concerns must notify the project chair promptly. A revised project plan or timeline may be required. Project delays may affect progression or graduation.

11. Student Support, Wellness, and Professional Development

11.1 Student Support Resources

Students are encouraged to use university and college resources, including academic support, library services, writing support, counseling, disability/accessibility services, financial aid, veteran services, technology support, and student wellness resources. Specific services may be found via the search function at UTC.edu. A list of commonly accessed resources is located below.

- Student Support [Services](#)
- [University Health Services](#)
- [The Counseling Center](#)
- [Writing and Communication Center](#)

11.2 Accessibility

Students who need accommodations should follow university procedures for disability support and accessibility services. Students are encouraged to initiate accommodation requests early. Accommodations are not retroactive and must be approved through the [Center for Student Accessibility](#).

11.3 Professional Development

DNP students are encouraged to engage in professional development consistent with doctoral education and advanced nursing practice. Activities may include professional organization membership, conference attendance, scholarly presentations, quality improvement work, committee participation, policy engagement, leadership development, and specialty certification preparation.

11.4 Student Participation in Governance

DNP students are encouraged to participate in program governance through appropriate representation on graduate concentration subcommittees, advisory processes, student feedback mechanisms, surveys, and other program evaluation activities. Student feedback is valued and contributes to continuous program improvement.

12. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

12.1 Student Evaluation

Students are evaluated through course assignments, examinations, clinical/practicum performance, simulation, competency validation, preceptor feedback, project milestones, professional behavior, and program outcomes.

12.2 Course and Program Evaluation

Students are expected to complete course, faculty, preceptor, clinical site, and program evaluations. Feedback is used to improve curriculum, teaching, clinical learning, student support, and program outcomes.

12.3 Program Outcomes and Accreditation Data

The College of Nursing may collect and review data related to progression, graduation, certification, employment, project completion, student satisfaction, clinical site quality, and alumni outcomes for accreditation and continuous improvement. Students and graduates may be asked to provide information after graduation.

13. Graduation and Degree Completion

13.1 Graduation Requirements

To graduate from the DNP program, students must complete all required coursework, clinical/practicum hours, simulation or competency requirements, translational project milestones, final project defense, Graduate School requirements, and any concentration-specific requirements.

13.2 Application for Graduation

Students are responsible for applying for graduation by university deadlines. Failure to apply by the deadline may delay degree conferral.

13.3 Certification and Licensure

Completion of the DNP degree does not automatically guarantee certification, licensure, or authorization to practice. Students are responsible for meeting all certification body and state board requirements for the role and state in which they intend to practice.

13.4 Post-Graduation Responsibilities

Graduates may be asked to provide certification results, licensure information, employment data, alumni feedback, contact information or other information needed for accreditation and program evaluation. Graduates are encouraged to remain engaged with the College of Nursing as alumni, preceptors, mentors, advisory board members, and professional partners.

14. Handbook Acknowledgment Form

I acknowledge that I have received or accessed the current UTC College of Nursing Doctor of Nursing Practice Student Handbook. I understand that I am responsible for reviewing and following all applicable university, college, program, course, clinical, practicum, and project policies. I understand that failure to read the handbook or related policies does not excuse me from compliance.

Student Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____