



PRACTICE-FOCUSED AND RESEARCH-FOCUSED DOCTORATE INFORMATIONAL COMPARISON: A CONSENSUS STATEMENT

The Southern Nursing Research Society (SNRS) acknowledges that doctoral nursing degree programs are of two principal types: research-focused and practice-focused. The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Doctor of Nursing Science (DNS, DSN, or DNSc) are considered research-focused degrees. The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and Doctor of Nursing (ND) are considered practice-focused degrees. SNRS has developed a doctoral nursing degree informational comparison chart to serve as a guiding framework to remain mission-focused and support SNRS Board and committees in strategic planning, decision making and organizational effectiveness.¹

| Comparison | Practice-Focused Doctorate | Research-Focused Doctorate |
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| Degree Focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nursing practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nursing research |
| Degree Purpose or Outcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare Advanced Practice Registered Nurses in four roles (certified nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialist, certified registered nurse anesthetist, and certified nurse midwives) ▪ Prepare leaders for organizational roles that examine aggregate or systems (nurse executives/leaders, public health nurses) ▪ Prepare nurses to translate research into practice ▪ Prepare student practitioners to collaborate with student researchers and/or research nurses in order to facilitate research findings into practice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare nurse scientist/researchers ▪ Prepare nurses for theory generation and testing to advance the science and theoretical foundations of nursing ▪ Prepare nurses to lead research teams ▪ Prepare nurses for a career in nursing research ▪ Engage in the responsible conduct of research ▪ Prepare nurses in the process of writing/publishing to disseminate their completed research ▪ Prepare nurse researchers to collaborate with student practitioners or graduate practitioners in order to facilitate research findings into practice. |

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| Degree Curriculum/Program of Study Focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote practice change at all levels of practice-bedside, aggregate, organizational or systems ▪ Epidemiology ▪ Population health ▪ Health promotion ▪ Quality Improvement ▪ Evidence-based practice ▪ Organization and system leadership ▪ Advanced Practice Registered Nursing role competencies (certified nurses practitioners, clinical nurse specialist, certified registered nurse anesthetist, and certified nurse midwives) ▪ Scholarship of practice ▪ Content and strategies for critiquing and selecting theories to guide practice ▪ Leadership theory (organization and system) ▪ Healthcare Policy (including budgets and financial management) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Statistics/biostatistics ▪ Research methods ▪ Theory development/generation/construction and testing ▪ Ethics ▪ Philosophy of science ▪ Scholarship of Discovery ▪ Grant writing ▪ Designing and testing interventions and innovations ▪ Evaluating and integrating research evidence ▪ Grant writing ▪ Designing and testing interventions and innovations to develop policies/procedure and implement workflows that align with standards of care ▪ Scholarship of Discovery (or “scholarly process advanced through responsible application of [scientific] knowledge [to promote nursing care]).² |
| Competencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge, skills, and ability to translate research into practice; lead the dissemination of new knowledge; integrate new knowledge into health care and nursing practice; policy development and analysis ▪ Transformation of health care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge, skills, and ability in theoretical, methodological, and analytical discovery of new knowledge; ▪ Application of new knowledge into nursing and health care; ▪ Dissemination of new knowledge³ ▪ Policy development and evaluation |
| Faculty Requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Doctoral degree in specific area of expertise ▪ High level of expertise in an area of practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research focused doctorate in nursing or related field ▪ Program of research ▪ Research methods expertise |
| Students Characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commitment to a career in nursing practice and/or service leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commitment to a research career as a nurse scientist |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focused on improving nursing and health care outcomes ▪ Evidence of scholarly ability and practice skills ▪ Ability to work as part of a team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focuses on a program of research to develop a body of nursing knowledge that improves practice and health care ▪ Oriented to producing new knowledge and establishing a career of productive scholarship within nursing and health care ▪ Evidence of scholastic preparation and intellectual knowledge, skills, and ability to pursue theoretical, methodological, and analytical discovery of new knowledge by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focusing on a program of research to develop a body of nursing knowledge that improves practice and health care. ○ Establishing a career of productive scholarship within nursing and health care. ▪ Ability to work as part of a team. |
| Final Project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scholarly project (with final manuscript) demonstrating synthesis of student's coursework and practice application that focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quality improvement ○ Evidence based practice change - or - ○ Final manuscript of project with public presentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Original research dissertation with oral defense of both proposal and dissertation. |
| Career Opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Academic faculty ▪ Advanced Practice Registered Nurse ▪ Nursing leadership and management positions ▪ Policy maker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Academic faculty ▪ Principal researcher/investigator ▪ Research scientist in health care organizations ▪ Policy maker ▪ Government positions ▪ Information Technology ▪ Application of skills in clinical area of expertise |

The Southern Nursing Research Society (SNRS) provides the following recommendations for this Practice-Focused and Research-Focused Consensus document:

- SNRS Board, committees and task forces uses this document to guide generative strategic discussions and planning;
- The program committee uses the consensus document to frame decisions regarding SNRS educational programs;
- SNRS members, member institutions, and affiliated academic institutions in the southern region refer to this consensus document as a comparative framework for doctoral nursing education.
- The SNRS Board recognizes the importance of clarifying and standardizing the purpose and goals of nursing education programs and the repercussions for degree holders when clarity is lacking. International academic nursing communities have consistently pursued one doctoral-level nursing degree and thus have not shared this challenge in nursing education¹

Reference

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2006). *The essentials of doctoral education for advanced nursing practice*. Washington, DC.

Resources:

1. Ponte, P. & Nicholas, P., **Addressing the Confusion Related to DNS, DNSc, and DSN Degrees, With Lessons for the Nursing Profession**, *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. 2015 Jul;47(4):347-53.
2. Loomis, J., Willard, B., Cohen, J., **Difficult Professional Choices: Deciding Between the PhD and the DNP in Nursing**. *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing – ANA Publication*. <http://ojin.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicald/OJIN>. Vol 12 - 2007; No 1:Jan 07.
3. American Association of Colleges of Nursing Comparison: DNP vs. PhD. Last verified 9/18/2019. <https://www.registerednursing.org/answers/difference-phd-dnp-nursing>.