Pittsburg State University Graduate School
DNP Scholarly Project Guide

Requirements and Guidelines for the Preparation
of a DNP Scholarly Project
September 28, 2016

Approved by the Graduate Council
Pittsburg State University

Revised May 2017

Introduction

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) is an advanced level graduate nursing degree program offering the highest level of preparation for nursing practice. At completion of the program, graduates will possess the terminal degree for nursing practice and will be prepared to function as expert clinicians, nurse leaders and/or clinical nursing faculty. The purpose of this DNP Scholarly Project Guide is to provide a guide for DNP faculty and students to use on the trek from the project's development phase through the DNP Scholarly Project completion. *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2006) states that "the final DNP project produces a tangible and deliverable academic product that is derived from the practice immersion experience and is reviewed and evaluated by an academic committee" (p.20). The School of Nursing supports the AACN's statement "the final DNP product documents outcomes of the student's educational experiences, provides a measurable medium for evaluating the immersion experience, and summarizes the student's growth in knowledge and expertise" (AACN, 2006). In accordance with AACN, Pittsburg State University describes the DNP Scholarly Project which "incorporates the requirements of the specialty and the institution that is awarding the degree (AACN, 2006, p.20)."

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2006). *The essentials of doctoral education for advanced nursing practice.* Retrieved from
http://www.aacn.nche.edu/dnp/Essentials.pdf

Policies Governing Writing a DNP Scholarly Project

The DNP Scholarly Project Purpose

The overarching goal of the DNP Scholarly Project is for the project to have an impact on the healthcare system and quality of care; thus; the context of outcomes must be considered. The DNP Scholarly Project will bring specific benefits for a group, population, community, or policy and will advance nursing practice at local, state or national levels. Multiple aspects of the DNP *Essentials* will be included in a broadly practice based DNP Scholarly Project. Finally, the DNP project will serve as the beginning of work to be continued by the DNP graduate. As the *Essentials* state, "whatever form the final DNP product takes, it will serve as a foundation for future scholarly practice" (AACN, 2006, p. 20). The *DNP Project Development Worksheet and Dissemination Agreement* (Appendix A) guides the student and DNP Project Advisor in determining if the proposed project meets these purposes.

DNP Scholarly Project

The DNP Scholarly Project is an amalgamation of the individual student's field of inquiry, requiring the identification of a practice-focused problem to be examined in depth with the aim of improvement of practice and/or patient outcomes. The DNP Scholarly Project must be written during enrollment in NURS 920 (DNP Capstone Project). The proposal must be read and approved by all members of the DNP Scholarly Project committee (See Appendix B for the *DNP*

Committee Approval form). Implementation of the project, or work on the DNP Scholarly Project may continue only after the DNP Scholarly Project committee has approved the proposal and the *Approval of DNP Scholarly Project Proposal* form (Appendix C) has been completed and submitted to the Director of the School of Nursing. One copy of the approved Final DNP Scholarly Project including a signed copy of the *Approval of Final DNP Scholarly Project* form (See Appendix D) is sent electronically to the Pittsburg State University Graduate School for filing. If appropriate, requests for Human Subjects Committee (HSC) approval will be submitted to the School of Nursing Institutional Review Committee for review prior to submission to HSC. The student will apply for Human Subjects Committee approval under the guidance of the DNP Scholarly Project Advisor.

Throughout enrollment in the DNP Scholarly Project hours the student will define a practice problem; conduct a comprehensive integrated review of the literature regarding the identified practice problem; design an appropriate project to further describe the problem or examine a suitable intervention; gather and analyze the data using the appropriate metric(s); interpret and evaluate the results of the inquiry; and disseminate project findings to a targeted audience. Project details must be agreed upon and approved by the DNP Scholarly Project Committee led by the assigned Scholarly Project faculty advisor. The DNP Scholarly Project is designed to be a series of steps. The student may complete one or more steps in a semester consistent with the number of credit hours enrolled in for that semester.

DNP Scholarly Project Technical Guidelines

The DNP Scholarly Guidelines are described in the *PSU DNP Scholarly Project Manual**. Each student is expected to use the *PSU DNP Scholarly Project Manual* as a guideline for the layout and design of the DNP Scholarly Project. The DNP Scholarly Project manual is available the Graduate School web site: http://www.pittstate.edu/office/graduate/. The *PSU DNP Scholarly Project Manual* is considered the first authority for the technical aspects of the DNP Scholarly Project.

*Please note that there are two different documents. The *PSU DNP Scholarly Project Guide* contains all the policies and procedures of the School of Nursing regarding completion of a Scholarly Project. The *PSU DNP Scholarly Project Manual* is the document that presents the technical aspects of formatting the DNP Scholarly Project.

DNP Scholarly Project Committee

The DNP Scholarly Project will be conducted under the advisement and direction of a doctoral prepared faculty member from The Pittsburg State University Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing. The committee structure for the DNP Scholarly Project will be comprised of at least three individuals. The committee structure should take into account the strengths and limitations of both the DNP student and his/her faculty advisor. This structure should meet a twofold goal. The first goal is to align the DNP student with the appropriate research and/or content experts in the area of the proposed DNP Scholarly Project. Second, the committee structure will support the completion of the project in a timely manner with the purpose of increasing the impact of the DNP Scholarly Project on the intended clinical site/population. The DNP Scholarly Project Advisor must be a graduate faculty member from the PSU School of Nursing. In cooperation with the thesis advisor, the student must establish the committee of at least two other graduate faculty and/or graduate service faculty members, one of which is outside of the degree. The

DNP Scholarly project committee may include an optional fourth member with is a graduate research associate faculty. This committee member may be a stakeholder within the organizational structure where the DNP Scholarly Project is taking place.

The DNP Scholarly Project Advisor and second committee member will be assigned by the Graduate faculty of the School of Nursing coordinated by the DNP Scholarly Project Coordinator during the first semester of the student's enrollment in DNP Project hours.

DNP Scholarly Project Steps/Forms

The scholarly project has been broken down into steps to follow for each credit of enrollment. The student should follow the following guidelines for completion of the Scholarly Project:

Enrollment credit 1

- Completion of *DNP Scholarly Project Development Worksheet and Dissemination Agreement* (Appendix A)
- Completion and submission of *DNP Committee Approval* form (Appendix B)
- Committee set up in the Graduate on-line system (See *Steps and Important Dates for Online Project* instructions on the Graduate School website)
- Completion of Project Chapter 1: Introduction (Identifying and analyzing a practice concern related to the student's interest area; define the concern; identify the DNP role in addressing the concern)

Enrollment credit 2

- Completion of Project Chapter 2: Integrated Review of the Literature

Enrollment credit 3

- Completion of Project Chapter 3: Methods

Enrollment credit 4

- Proposal Defense
- IRB approval (If approval or permission from another agency is necessary to complete the project, student should obtain that after proposal approval but prior to or concurrently with the PSU IRB approval.)
- Implementation Step/Collection of Data
- Completion and submission of *Approval of DNP Scholarly Project Proposal* form (Appendix C) to Project Advisor
- Submit copy of proposal and add DNP Project title to Graduate on-line system (See *Steps and Important Dates for Online Project* instructions on the Graduate School website)

Enrollment credit 5

- Completion of Project Chapters 4 & 5: Results (analysis, if appropriate and synthesis of findings) & Discussion (establish conclusions and recommendations based on the evidence from the project)

Enrollment credit 6

- In consultation with the DNP Scholarly Project Advisor, schedule a meeting with the DNP Scholarly Project Committee for the defense of the project.
- Review with the DNP Scholarly Project Advisor the expectations for defending the project.
- At the conclusion of the defense, obtain signatures on all of the Approval Pages (one for the electronic submission and one for each copy of the project to be bound). The approval page for the electronic submission must have original signatures of the committee in black ink.
- Submit a rough draft of your project to each member of the DNP Scholarly Project Committee and to the Graduate and Continuing Studies Office through Digital Commons prior to the Final day for first draft, including a copy of the approved Application for Initial Review of Research Using Human Subjects**.** (See *Steps and Important Dates for Online Project* instructions on the Graduate and Continuing Studies Office website)
- Final Edits
- Completion of final written product and submission to Digital Commons including *DNP Scholarly Project Approval* page and Copyright agreement (Appendix D) before the Final Day for submission as listed in the University Calendar
- Submission of paper copies to the Graduate and Continuing Studies Office for binding

Note: According to Graduate School policy, students planning a Fall graduation must have completed the first 2 steps in the on-line graduate system by March 1, the Spring before the intended graduation date. Students who are planning a Spring/Summer graduation must have completed the first 2 steps in the on-line graduate system by October 1, the Fall before the intended graduation date. Student should consult the PSU Academic Calendar for all other deadlines associated with DNP Scholarly Project submission to the Graduate School.

*If the scholarly project is not completed within the required six credits, the student will be required to maintain continuous enrollment of 1 hour per semester to maintain their admission status in the School of Nursing DNP program. If continuous enrollment is not maintained, the student will be required to re-apply for admission to the program to complete the degree.

The steps/forms for the student completing a DNP Scholarly Project are available on-line through the Graduate School website: http://www.pittstate.edu/office/graduate/ and the Doctor of Nursing Practice program website: http://www.pittstate.edu/department/nursing/dnp.dot

Policy for Grading of DNP Scholarly Project

DNP Scholarly Project hours will be graded in the semester in which the student has enrolled in them according to the letter grade scale. An incomplete or in progress grade will be utilized in rare instances when a student is unable to complete a course due to circumstances beyond his/her control. The student must have successfully completed a majority of the course work to be eligible.

Final Product for the DNP Scholarly Project

At the completion of the DNP Scholarly Project, the student will submit a formal five chapter written description of the project following the outline presented in the *Complete DNP Scholarly Project Written Dissemination Guidelines* (Appendix E). In addition, a final scholarly product of the DNP Scholarly Project may be required depending on the nature of the scholarly project. It may take many forms, for example, a manuscript suitable for publication (the paper does not have to be published), summary paper that describes evidence-based protocol (protocol attached), and/or other artifacts. The final product will be approved by all members of the DNP Scholarly Project committee according to School of Nursing published calendar deadlines.

Research Involving Human Subjects

Federal policy requires that all research involving human subjects be approved by an Institutional Review Board to ensure that the rights and welfare of human subjects are properly protected. The Committee for the Protection of Human Research Subjects, designated by the Graduate Dean, must review all research dealing with human subjects conducted by Pittsburg State University faculty, staff, or students. The researcher is required to complete the Application for Initial Review of Research Using Human Subjects prior to any research being conducted. A copy of the approved application from the Committee must be submitted along with the draft of DNP Scholarly Project to the Graduate School. All information and forms can be found at the following web site: http://www.pittstate.edu/office/grants/research-involving-human-subjects.dot

DNP Scholarly Project Review

The student is responsible for submitting a rough draft of the DNP Scholarly Project to the Graduate School or technical review during the semester in which the student plans to graduate. The DNP Scholarly Project should be submitted electronically through Digital Commons by the date given in the University's academic calendar for "Final day for the first draft of thesis and ED.S project." The submission will be evaluated within five working days for the layout and design of the document in accordance with the *DNP Scholarly Project Manual*. It is expected that the student will make all corrections as indicated, prior to final submission into Digital Commons and binding.

Publication and Binding

Each student is required to submit their final DNP Scholarly project electronically through Digital Commons. A completed copyright agreement should be signed and delivered to the Graduate and Continuing Studies office with copies of the DNP Scholarly Project approval sheet. To request bound copies of a DNP Scholarly Project, printed copies of the project should be delivered to the Graduate and Continuing Studies Office. These copies will be sent out by the Graduate and Continuing Studies Office to be bound for a fee. When the bound copies are returned, the School of Nursing will contact the student to let them know their copies are ready.

Each student must pay to have a minimum of five (5) copies of the DNP Scholarly Project bound. One copy is for the School of Nursing, one copy for each committee member (minimum of 3 copies) and one copy will be returned to the student by the School of Nursing. The student must complete, print and submit the Submission of *DNP Scholarly Project for Publication* (Appendix E) online form and a signed Copyright Agreement (Appendix F) with the copies of the DNP Scholarly Project to be bound, as well as the required payment for binding to the Graduate School office. All copies of the DNP Scholarly Project to be bound must be complete and enough CDs, tapes, etc. must be included for every copy. A final submission of the project into Digital Commons is also required.

<div align="center">**Roles and Responsibilities**</div>

Student

The student is responsible for communicating ideas for their DNP Scholarly Project to the DNP Project Coordinator in a timely manner in the first semester of enrollment. Once the DNP faculty have assigned a Project advisor and second committee member, the student works with the advisor to select the third committee member. The student is responsible for completing the online steps/forms for their DNP Scholarly Project. The student is also responsible for obtaining all signatures/approvals for each step/form.

DNP Scholarly Project Coordinator/Graduate Coordinator

The DNP Scholarly Project Coordinator at the discretion of the Graduate Coordinator is responsible for: 1) first DNP Capstone Project hour(s) enrollment of each DNP student, 2) obtaining DNP Scholarly Project ideas from students to present to Graduate faculty, 3) facilitating assignment of DNP Project Advisors and second committee members, 4) communicating committee assignments to DNP students and 5) tracking committee assignments by student and faculty.

DNP Scholarly Project Advisor

The DNP Scholarly Project advisor is selected by the School of Nursing graduate faculty under the coordination of the DNP Project Coordinator, must hold rank as Graduate Teaching Faculty at Pittsburg State University. The DNP Scholarly Project advisor should be familiar with the student's work and should be in a field relevant to the topic of the DNP Scholarly Project or in the development of a scholarly project. During the initial meeting with the Scholarly Project advisor, the *DNP Project Development Worksheet and Dissemination Agreement* (Appendix A) will be completed as well as selection of the third committee member and completion of the *DNP Committee Member Approval* form (Appendix B). The DNP Scholarly Project advisor provides advice and direction to the student on all matters relating to the DNP Scholarly Project. The project advisor is the chair of the DNP Scholarly Project committee and in consultation with the student, recommends additional committee members for the DNP Scholarly Project committee. The advisor approves the DNP Scholarly Project proposal when required by the DNP Scholarly Project committee or School of Nursing. The advisor and the student complete and submit the *Application for Initial Review of Research Using Human Subjects* form (See Graduate School website for a copy of this form) prior to any research being conducted. The advisor coordinates the DNP Scholarly Project defense and submits the results on the student's petition page online in the Graduate System.

DNP Scholarly Project Committee

The DNP Scholarly Project Committee will be comprised of at least 3 members – a DNP Project Advisor, at least one second committee member from within the School of Nursing and at least one committee member from outside the school of nursing. The project committee makes recommendations and suggestions to the student on the DNP Scholarly Project content and format. The project committee conducts the DNP Scholarly Project proposal defense under the guidance of the DNP Scholarly Project advisor and accepts or rejects the DNP Scholarly Project proposal. The project committee conducts the DNP Scholarly Project final defense under the guidance of the DNP Scholarly Project advisor and accepts or rejects the final DNP Scholarly Project. All members of the

faculty DNP Scholarly Project committee must sign all copies of the approval page of the final DNP Scholarly Project before the DNP Scholarly Project and grade can be submitted to the Graduate School.

Director of the School of Nursing

According to the policies and procedures of the School of Nursing (SON) determined by the SON Graduate faculty upon the authorization of the PSU Graduate school, the Director of the School of Nursing has the responsibility for approval of: 1) DNP Scholarly Project Committee, 2) DNP Scholarly Project Proposal and 3) final DNP Scholarly Project.

Graduate School Dean

The Dean of the Graduate School approves the DNP Scholarly Project advisor and committee in accordance with the Constitution and By-laws of the Graduate Faculty. The Dean also serves as the final authority for approval of the style and format of the DNP Scholarly Project and establishes the calendar of timelines for all forms and the final DNP Scholarly Project to be submitted. The Dean of the Graduate School will also act as a mediator if the faculty DNP Scholarly Project committee cannot come to an agreement on the acceptance of a DNP Scholarly Project.

DNP Project Development Worksheet, Planning Guide and Dissemination Agreement

Student Name:

DNP Scholarly Project Advisor:

Second IRB School of Nursing Committee Member:

1. Describe the idea/topic of interest for the scholarly project.

2. Which DNP Essential(s) will be demonstrated in this idea for a scholarly project? (See http://www.aacn.nche.edu/dnp/Essentials.pdf for a pdf of the essentials.)

3. Is there the potential for innovation and creativity to affect an outcome?

4. Will you be able to expose the scholarly project to public scrutiny and peer review?

5. What type of Scholarship is evidenced within the project idea – discovery/integration/application/teaching? (*Moran, Burson & Conrad, 2014, p. 68-69)

6. What aspects of practice is the idea focused on – population, system, policy?

7. Is there a contribution to comprehensive quality health care? Are there specific benefits for a group, population, community, or policy? Does the project advance nursing practice at the local, state, and national levels?

8. What areas of expertise and passion does the student bring that they can build on?

9. What skill set does the student need to develop in order to successfully implement the scholarly project?

10. What skill set does the project require that would be added through the 3rd member of the committee? An outside/practice mentor? A statistician?

Burson, R. (2014). *Scholarship in practice* in Moran, K, Burson, R., & Conrad, D. *The doctor of nursing practice scholarly project: A framework for success.* Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning.

DNP Scholarly Project Planning Guide

The following is a planning guide to help you and your DNP Scholarly Project Advisor to plan completion of project milestones. Please provide an estimate of when you want to have each step completed to review with your Chair. The outline works back from completion to start.

Planned completion date:

Project Dissemination Deadline (Written and Oral):

Chapter 5 to Committee Chair:

Chapter 4 to Committee Chair:

Project Activity Deadline:

Project Proposal Defense Deadline:

Chapter 3 to Committee Chair:

Chapter 2 to Committee Chair:

Chapter 1 to Committee Chair:

When working with your committee on a Scholarly Project, please anticipate that they will need 2 calendar weeks from the date you submit it to them to provide feedback. Once the 2 calendar weeks have passed, gentle reminders to your DNP Scholarly Project Advisor that you are waiting for feedback is acceptable.

Student Dissemination Agreement

I agree to submit a manuscript of this scholarly project to an appropriate peer reviewed nursing journal and/or submit an abstract for presentation at a professional conference within one year of completion of the project. I will be listed as primary author, my DNP Scholarly Project Advisor will be listed as secondary author and the remainder of my committee may also be listed as authors at the discretion of myself and my Project Advisor, if they so wish. If I am unable to submit the manuscript to a peer reviewed nursing journal or an abstract to a professional conference within one year, I give my DNP Scholarly Project Advisor permission to submit the article or abstract. If the article or abstract is submitted by the DNP Scholarly Project Advisor, I understand that the DNP Scholarly Project Advisor will be listed as primary author and I will be listed as secondary author with the remaining committee members being listed as authors at the discretion of myself and my Project Advisor, if they so wish.

_____   _____

DNP Student Signature   DNP Scholarly Project Advisor Signature

_____

Date

Appendix B
DNP Scholarly Project Committee Approval Form
Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing
Pittsburg State University

_____   _____
Date   Student ID

_____
Last Name   First Name   Middle/Maiden Name

Mailing Address: _____
                          Street   City   State   Zip

E-mail: _____ Telephone: _____

DNP Scholarly Project Committee Appointment:

_____   _____ _____ _____
Name (please print) (Chair)   Signature   Date   E-mail

_____   _____ _____ _____
Name (please print)   Signature   Date   E-mail

_____   _____ _____ _____
Name (please print)   Signature   Date   E-mail

Committee Approval:

_____   _____
Director of Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing   Date

_____   _____
Student   Date

Appendix C
DNP Scholarly Project Proposal Approval Form
Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing
Pittsburg State University

_____
Student ID

DNP Scholarly Project Proposal Approval:

This is to confirm that the DNP Scholarly Project proposal:

_____
Title of DNP Scholarly Project

By: _____
Graduate Student Name

has been approved. Permission is granted to conduct the project after the approval by the appropriate Human Subjects Review boards and with the following changes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____	_____	_____
Name (please print) (Chair)	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name (please print)	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name (please print)	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Director of the School of Nursing (please print)	Signature	Date

Appendix D
DNP Scholarly Project Approval Page

TITLE OF THE DNP SCHOLARLY PROJECT

Name of the Student

APPROVED:

DNP Project Advisor _____
DNP Project Advisor Name, Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing

Committee Member _____
Committee Member Name, Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing

Committee Member _____
Committee Member Name, Department or Affiliating Agency

Director _____
Director, Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing

Appendix E
Complete DNP Scholarly Project Written Dissemination Guidelines

Abstract
Follow the Graduate College guidelines when writing this.

Table of Contents
Type this out for your final project defense; once you have your final copy revised, you can add in the page numbers

List of Tables
(Using a 3-column format, list the number of the table, the title of the table, and the page number where the table can be found in your document. Once you finish your final defense, you can add in the page numbers.)

List of Figures
(Similar to the List of Tables, use a 3-column format, list the number of the figure, the title of the figure, and the page number where the figure can be found in your document. Once you finish your final defense, you can add in the page numbers.)

Chapter 1: Introduction/Purpose (10-15 pages)

   Description of the Clinical Problem/Issue - Describe the problem/issue, incidence

   Significance - focus on significance to nursing

   Specific Aims/Purpose - what will your project do to address the problem & significance of your planned work)

   Theoretical Framework, if appropriate - link key variables in your planned study to your chosen framework; provide diagrams if appropriate

   Project (Practice) Question(s)/Hypotheses - number or bullet them

   Definition of Key Terms/Variables - conceptual definitions

   Logic Model of the Proposed DNP Project – illustration of relationship between proposed project concepts

   Summary of chapter - 1-3 paragraphs

Chapter 2: Evidence/Integrated Review of the Literature (12-15 pages)

   The organization of Chapter 2 varies depending on the topic and project

A. Paragraph outlining the organization of the Chapter

Evidence
- Traditional review of literature to provide background for the project
- Practice change guidelines and appraisal
- A combination of literature review and practice change guidelines and appraisal

Summary of chapter **-**1-2 paragraphs

Chapter 3: Methods/Plan (10-15 pages) As appropriate to the individual project and determined by the DNP Committee, the DNP student may include all or some of the following components.

A. *Project Design* - describe it & justify rationale for choosing, diagrams might be helpful

Sample/Target Population

Sample Access/Target Population - Define target & accessible populations, discuss power, if applicable

Sample/Target Population Recruitment - where and how subjects will be recruited

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

Protection of Human Subjects - describe how you will obtain IRB approval, how subjects will be protected, risks & benefits of participation

Instruments, if appropriate

Start out by giving your operational definitions for each variable in your study. For each instrument used, describe what it measures, how it is administered, what type of items (e.g. Likert, open-ended, etc.), how many items, reported measurement reliability (Cronbach's alpha, etc.) in previous studies, measurement validity, level of measurement of the data obtained (i.e. nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio), how scored, range of possible scores, how scores are interpreted (e.g. high scores mean greater anxiety, etc.)

Procedure (This section will vary according to type of project and should include some of the following. Please discuss with your Committee Chair during planning.)

Describe step-by-step what will happen in the project. Suggested aspects to include are:
- Statement about Seeking IRB Approval
- Statement of Mutual Agreement with Cooperating Agency
- Timeline of Project Phases
- Resources Needed – Personnel, Technology, Fiscal, etc.

- Market analysis, strategic analysis and /or product/services, sales/marketing, operations and financial plan that justifies the need, feasibility and sustainability of the proposed project.
- How you'll identify eligible subjects/participants/organizations; How you'll approach eligible subjects/participants/organizations
- A description of <u>everything</u> that will happen to subjects/participants/organizations in the project (you can never be too detailed here);
- How you'll collect the data, safeguard it, maintain fidelity to project protocol (that means doing the procedure the same way every time with every subject/participant/organization)
- What outcome data will be collected

Treatment of Data/Outcomes/Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Measures Linked to Objectives

Outcomes/Evidence-based Measures are Appropriate for Objectives

Tools/Instruments Described and Linked to Measures and Objectives

Methods of analysis for each Measurement

Evaluation Measures Linked to Objectives

Plan for Sustainability
Framework for sustainability should include financial as well as systems or political realities.

Chapter 4: Evaluation Results (10-15 pages)

In one paragraph, re-state the overall purpose/aim of the project and each project (practice) question/hypothesis.

A. Description of Sample/Population, if appropriate
Report the demographic characteristics of your sample/population. At a minimum, this includes number of subjects in the sample, length of time it took to collect data, gender, education, race/ethnicity, age. Include any other pertinent demographics important to your study.

B. Description of Key Terms/Variables
Describe your major project variables. If your study has independent and dependent variables, organize this section according to these subheadings.

C. Analyses of Project Questions/Hypotheses
Answer each research question. Remind the reader of each project question/hypothesis. Specify what method you used to analyze the data for each project question/hypothesis:

descriptive statistics—specify means/SD, frequency; t-tests, ANOVA, correlations, etc. Use tables to visually display the findings. Use a statistics book for guidance on what values are typically reported depending on the test performed—e.g. degrees of freedom, etc. If testing for significance, report the p value and describe in words (i.e. interpret) whether the results were significant or not.

D. Additional Statistical Analyses, if appropriate
Explain any additional analyses that were conducted beyond those performed to answer the research questions. This is where interesting or serendipitous findings should be reported along with a brief explanation/justification of why you performed these additional analyses—in other words, don't allow this section to look like a "fishing expedition" but instead justify why you are including this.

E. Summary
Restate the purpose of the study. In other words, repeat the major findings of the study.

Chapter 5 : Discussion (15-20 pages)

A. Relationship of Outcomes to Research
Start with reminding the reader of the overall purpose of the study and what you discovered through the project. Next, Project Question by Project Question (or hypothesis by hypothesis), address how each result you obtained either supports or refutes previous findings. Speculate on reasons why your outcomes matched or did not match the research (e.g. Was your sample different in some way? Can measurement error explain why your findings are different?). Were there any unexpected outcomes? Speculate why these may have occurred. Are statistics a possible explanation for your results? This section is where the you reflect on the position of your project results within the broader context of nursing knowledge.

B. Observations
General observations about your project—what was interesting or noteworthy? What did you learn about your topic when conducting your study? Did the study instruments you used perform as you expected them to? Interpret your outcomes—are they worrisome in some way? Reassuring?

C. Evaluation of Your Theoretical Framework, as appropriate
How do your results support or not support the theoretical framework you used? What other variables (that you didn't include in your study) might explain or better describe or answer your project questions/hypotheses?

D. Evaluation of Your Logic Model
How do your results support or not support the logic model you proposed in chapter 1? Did your project results demonstrate the relationship between concepts in the manner you expected as you developed your logic model for your project proposal?

E.   Limitations

Did your method for sampling introduce bias or error into the results? Was the instrument a factor in limiting your project? (Were the project instruments appropriate for this type of sample? Did you adapt the project instrument? If so, how did that impact your project?) Was time a factor? Were resources (fiscal, organizational, human) a factor?

F. Implications for Future Projects and/or Research

What are the next steps in practice improvement or knowledge development on this topic? How would you improve upon the design of your project for the next time? Should the project be replicated with a different sample? What additional knowledge or practice application is necessary on this topic?

G. Implications for Practice/Health Policy/Education

Discuss the clinical significance of your findings. What are your suggested changes for nursing practice, especially for Advanced Practice Nurses? For nursing education? For health policy?

H. Conclusion

In a paragraph, repeat your overall study aim/purpose and state what your project outcomes have contributed to nursing knowledge, practice, and/or theory.

References

Use APA format! Check the APA manual carefully to be sure volume numbers are italicized, journal names are written out in full and not abbreviated, punctuation is correct, indentation is correct, etc. If you cited it in your paper, it must be in the reference list. If it is in the reference list, you must have cited it in your paper.

Appendices

At a minimum, include copies of the study instrument, a copy of the consent form or cover letter used for consent, a copy of the IRB approval from Pittsburg State University and any other institutions, any permission you may have received to adapt/alter study instruments that you used.

Title

Be sure to have a title that accurately reflects your project. This is critically important because many computer searches rely heavily on the titles of written works and the idea is to share your results with others. The title you choose ideally should help your project be easily found by others with similar interests.

Other Hints

- Be sure to use APA format for tables. APA tables are NOT boxed in (i.e. no grid lines) so don't use the "create a table" command in MS Word if it doesn't look like an APA table when printed.
- Use italics for designating statistical symbols
- Try to read several well-written projects by prior students for a more concrete idea of what the finished product should look like. Specifically try to look for one that your project advisor chaired as it will likely reflect the style that your particular advisor prefers
- Plan on writing several drafts of each chapter
- Use APA format for references right in the beginning—using RefWorks or EndNote or another reference management software package is helpful
- Use the project writing guidelines (i.e. margins, etc) posted on the Graduate School website for your proposal approval—students in the past have found that using other formats and then trying to change margins later for the final draft ends up causing problems with spacing and format that is very time-consuming to correct.
- VERY IMPORTANT! When you write your project proposal, it is written in the future tense (what you PLAN to do for the project). However, when preparing the final project report AFTER you have carried out the project, you need to revise the first 3 chapters (i.e. the proposal section) so that they are written in the past tense (because your plan was executed).

Appendix F
PSU Electronic Thesis Copyright Agreement

Pittsburg State University acknowledges and upholds federal and state copyright laws. Copyright protections exist for documents and information distributed and shared via the Internet. Pittsburg State University accepts the copyright guidelines outlined in the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. Pittsburg State University is an "online service provider" to the campus community and takes these responsibilities seriously. Pittsburg State University's students, faculty and staff must adhere to ethical copyright practices. Copyright privileges now vest immediately upon creating your work, without the requirement of notice or registration. However, you should still include a copyright notice on your thesis. For example, [©2012 by Jane Student. All rights reserved.] The notice should appear in a conspicuous location, customarily just after the title page. Copyright registration is optional, but still recommended. It establishes a public record of your thesis and your copyright. In the U. S., registration is required before you can file an infringement lawsuit. Registration also allows you to be awarded damages and attorney fees in an infringement action. Generally, you must have registered before the infringement occurs to have these benefits. Because of the availability of content on the open web via institutional repositories, digital collections, and other avenues, registering for U. S. copyright can be a significant benefit for the protection of your work. For further information, see information in Title 17, Section 504 of the U. S. Code. Student Approval to Include Work in Pittsburg State University Digital Library I, _____, hereby grant to Pittsburg State University and to its agents the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media now or hereafter known under the following provisions. _____ Full and immediate access. _____ Restricted access for a period of _____ (1) one year or _____ (2) two years. _____ Permanent or restricted access for a period of _____ years granted by Graduate Dean. I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works all or part of this thesis. In addition, I hereby certify that if appropriate, I have obtained written permission from the owner(s) of third party copyrighted material included in my thesis.

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