WALDEN UNIVERSITY

MANUAL FOR
STAFF
EDUCATION
PROJECT
Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)
Scholarly Project
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Prior to beginning the work of any DNP scholarly project, Walden students will complete the steps of prospectus development and approval. Once the prospectus is approved, the committee will be formed, proposal will be developed, and the oral proposal defense will be completed per the DNP Project Process Guide. The ethics approval process begins during proposal development but can only be finalized after the proposal defense is entered into MyDR.
PRINCIPLES OF STAFF EDUCATION

There is no single model for development and delivery of staff education, as clinical needs, organizational structures, and budget will guide the concepts and processes.

- The program must include a well-developed framework for effective programming and evaluation for the adult learners within the context of the setting.
- Evaluation must be planned and should be formative or iterative in nature, with ongoing evaluation occurring throughout the planning stages.
- Key stakeholders should be included in the process.
- A process for summative or impact evaluation must be included that demonstrates outcomes related to the identified staff education program objectives.
- The evaluation should identify the program’s impact on social change as an outcome.
DEFINITION OF STAFF EDUCATION PROJECTS

Staff education may include nurse residencies, orientation, in-service education, and continuing education for professional staff. **Walden requires that a partner organization oversee the staff education activities. Walden is able to oversee the evaluation data collection, if the site wishes (see IRB steps below).** Programs may be multidisciplinary in nature, meaning that other professional healthcare clinicians may attend and benefit from the content. Staff education is usually developed to meet a need identified by an organization or clinical practice setting to improve patient care, achieve standards of practice, or meet regulatory guidelines.

DNP students may not develop scholarly projects that involve preprofessional students as their target population. Also, note that projects involving education of patients and families will need to use a different IRB process that takes longer. DNP students who wish to work with patients and families should discuss the extended IRB approval process for such data collection with their chair.

It is important to understand the expectations for accomplishing a staff education project in the context of the DNP scholarly project.

Scholarly projects related to staff education are aligned with the *DNP Essentials*. 
PURPOSE OF STAFF EDUCATION

For the DNP nurse, staff education is often used to help inform and improve knowledge and skills related to best clinical practice.

Steps for Developing a Staff Education Project

Planning

• Analyze needs and establish the criteria for the staff education program using available existing data from site, literature, or theoretical support.
• Develop PICO practice-focused question(s).
• Discuss needs and staff education program goals with organizational leadership (via informal conversation rather than survey/interview).
• Obtain a commitment of support from organizational leadership.
• Formulate specific learning objectives.
• Research the literature for relevant teaching materials or content that address the program goals.
• Plan or develop the staff education program, including the content and the delivery strategy using appropriate instructional methods and theoretical framework (teaching/learning, adult education, and nursing theories).
• Follow a systematic process for development of the education that includes appropriate pretesting of any newly developed material with identified stakeholders and end-users. It is preferred that the DNP student adapt or utilize educational materials that have been developed and have been tested and validated for accuracy of content.
• Verify the staff education program plan with organizational leadership and end-users via formative or iterative review (via anonymous questionnaires).
• Revise the staff education program plan based on formative or iterative review.
• Present the revised staff education program to organizational leadership and end-users/key stakeholders and discuss to validate content and ensure usability.
• Secure resources to implement the staff education program.
• Finalize development of the staff education program including a second anonymous questionnaire review with organizational leadership and end-users.
• Seek appropriate ethics approval at the site and through Walden IRB (see below).

Implementation

• Support the organization in the recruitment of staff for the education program, unless the program is required by the organization. Note that the site, not Walden, will be overseeing the education program so all recruitment materials must reflect that.
• Support the organization in the implementation of the planned staff education program
• Request evaluation from the staff education program participants

Evaluation

• Have the participants complete a summative or impact evaluation of their learning based on an anonymous paper-based or online questionnaire that is directly related to the identified learning objectives. If a validated questionnaire is available, that should be used, as opposed to the student creating a new questionnaire.
• When possible it is recommended that the student apply for, and receive approval for continuing education credits from an approved provider.
• If providing continuing education credits, utilize evaluation methods required by the provider.
• Determine the effectiveness of the staff education program through analysis of the summative or impact evaluation.
• Interpret results/determining the applicability of results for the organization and for social change.
• Outline the procedures used to assure the integrity of the evidence, including approaches to managing outliers and missing information.
• Describe analysis procedures used in the doctoral project to address the practice-focused question(s) (e.g., coding, statistical analyses, etc.).
• Communicate the results and recommendations to organizational leadership and program stakeholders
  • Include a systematic presentation and synthesis of the findings of the education offering. Document an assessment of the findings that includes appropriate methodology for the education program delivered.
• Present findings through the DNP final project following the DNP template and Checklist.

The doctoral project is grounded in a focused application of related concepts, models, and/or theories consistent with the DNP Checklist.

Obtaining Ethics Approval in Compliance With Institutional Review Board (IRB) Requirements

All doctoral projects are required to have ethics approval from the university’s IRB, even those that might not be considered “research.” The DNP program has set up a blanket ethics preapproval for staff education Doctoral projects falling within the parameters described in the blue table below, as per the preapproved Site Agreement (Appendix A) and the Consent Form for Anonymous Questionnaires (Appendix B). Only staff education projects involving public data, the literature, anonymous questionnaires from site staff, and archival data from the organization(s) are eligible for the blanket preapproval.

Edits to Appendices A and B are not permitted. If a student needs to customize anything about either of the two appendices or add more data points (such as observations, or interviews), then
the blanket approval cannot be utilized (and the student should follow the standard IRB approval steps in the DNP Project Process Guide).

**Steps for Ethics Approval:**

These steps can be completed any time *after* (a) the chair has uploaded the proposal into MyDR for URR review, *and* (b) the student has identified a site.

An exception to requirement (b) is made for those hospital, military, and education settings where the site representative has informed the student that the Site Agreement cannot be signed until Walden’s ethics approval has been obtained first; in these situations, the student should select the option on the final page of Form A that indicates that the Site Agreement can only be signed after Walden’s ethics approval.

**Step 1:** To qualify for preapproved status, all doctoral students completing a staff education project is responsible for **completing the web-based Form A** (the same form that all DNP students use to start the ethics approval process). In the first page of Form A, the students need to indicate that they will be conducting a project that falls within the preapproved parameters for a staff education project and this will cause them to skip the questions that are not applicable. The students will also need to enter the details for the partner site(s). The final page in Form A will provide instructions for next steps, based on the responses the students enter into Form A.

**Step 2:** For staff education projects on the preapproved track, the instructions on the final page of Form A will indicate that the students can either upload the signed Site Agreement (Appendix A) into the form or e-mail it to IRB@waldenu.edu at a later date. Note that the Consent Form (Appendix B) does not need to be sent to IRB because it has already been preapproved and does not need to be signed.

**Step 3:** Once Form A is received by the IRB, an IRB staff member will respond within **10 business days** to the students and chairs with either (a) an e-mail confirmation that the ethical standards have been met (i.e., the data collection procedures fall within the preapproved parameters), or (b) a request for more information. For certain sites (within Department of Defense, international contexts, universities, or research hospital systems), additional documentation and compliance steps may be required by the site, so the IRB staff will work with the student to meet all of the site’s requirements. The IRB would continue to correspond with the students until all ethical issues are addressed. Once (a) occurs, the students can focus on working toward proposal approval. Doctoral students with project data falling *outside* the preapproved parameters will be directed to obtain IRB approval in the standard manner, which is likely to take a minimum of 4 weeks longer.

**Step 4:** At this point, to finalize ethics approval, students just need to have the project design approved via the proposal defense. Thus, once the students have successfully defended the proposal, the MyDR system will automatically copy the IRB on the proposal approval notice and that will trigger the IRB to reach out to the students via e-mail to confirm whether/how the data collection plan might have changed as a result of the proposal defense. If changes to the data collection plan were made, then the IRB will
need updated versions of the ethics application materials. If the **students confirm no changes were made**, then the IRB will e-mail the students and their chairs a formal ethics approval notification, which signifies that the students may begin collecting data.

The doctoral students must be actively enrolled in the doctoral study course shell to receive final IRB approval notification and must remain enrolled while collecting data. IRB approval is not valid if students are on a leave of absence or otherwise not enrolled.

**A staff education project is also required to adhere to the following ethical requirements:**

- In the doctoral project documents, the doctoral students must change the name of any partner organizations and generalize the location(s) so that the organizations are not identifiable. It is important that the doctoral students redact any information that will lead a reader to identify an organization’s identity. It is up to the organization to choose if the project should be publicized. Therefore, it is not appropriate for doctoral students to make the partner site’s name known in the doctoral project document that will be published in ProQuest. Doctoral students are required to change the name of the organization in all materials (including drafts shared with peers and faculty members) to protect the organization’s identity. In some cases, it might be appropriate for doctoral students to maintain confidentiality by removing key pieces of evidence/data that might give away the organization’s identity. Doctoral students should direct questions to [IRB@waldenu.edu](mailto:IRB@waldenu.edu) when these situations arise.

- Doctoral students are responsible for complying with all of the organization’s policies. This includes, but is not limited to, site IRB policies and site resource use policies (pertaining to copying/ printing materials, etc.).

- Doctoral students may not collect any type of data from patients or patients’ family members for this type of project. If, at some point, they wish to pursue that type of data collection, they will need to follow the standard university procedures to obtain prior approval from the Walden University IRB.

- Collecting data from human subjects without appropriate IRB approval can result in invalidation of the data and dismissal from the program.

- Doctoral students are responsible for ensuring that no proprietary, sensitive, or confidential information is disclosed in the doctoral project document. They are responsible for learning about the organization’s policies on use of the organization’s resources (including email addresses, printing materials, etc.) for individual projects. Many organizations have restrictions on use of company resources for educational projects.

Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB’s ethics approval, and the university will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.
Other student obligations will be outlined in the final page of Form A. Faculty supervision requirements for staff education projects include the following:

- The supervising faculty member will ensure that the students properly request any project design changes by e-mailing ethicsDNP@waldenu.edu.

- The supervising faculty member will ensure that the students promptly report any unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events and general problems within 1 week by e-mailing ethicsDNP@waldenu.edu.

- The supervising faculty member will report any possible noncompliance on the part of the students by e-mailing ethicsDNP@waldenu.edu.

- The supervising faculty member’s supervision role continues as long as the students remain enrolled in the present course with the faculty member.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources That Have Been Preapproved by IRB for Staff Education Doctoral Projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Data: Reports, Websites</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literature as Data</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anonymous Questionnaires From Staff</strong></td>
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Partner organization’s deidentified records* including: aggregate** patient records, operational records pertaining to staff training and delivery of care, meeting minutes, digital/audio/video recordings created by site, training materials, protocols, manuals, reports, agreements, questionnaires that were administered under auspices of site as part of quality improvement (QI) operations, and other internal documents that the site has released to the student for use in the doctoral project

*as the partner organization’s leadership deems fit to share with student (as per confidentiality terms in this guide)

**Students are only preapproved to analyze patient records that have been aggregated via asking a site contact for high level summary data (without the student actually looking at patient records). Examples:

- Citing rates of certain diagnoses: “Before the new protocol was implemented, 20% of asthma cases were readmitted within 30 days. After the protocol was implemented, readmissions went down to 10%.”
- Citing patterns among patients: “At this facility, males are twice as likely to be admitted for [X diagnosis] than females.”
- Press Ganey scores can be analyzed.
- Patient satisfaction reports can be analyzed.

The table below includes those data tools that do NOT fall under the IRB’s preapproval. Any students wishing to analyze one of the data sources below must go through the standard IRB process to gain formal IRB approval independently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources That are NOT Preapproved by IRB for Staff Education Doctoral Projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(These all require the student to obtain IRB review/approval independently via the standard process.)</td>
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<p>| Patient Records With Identifiers | While students may, in some cases, access patient records during the practicum in support of patient care, the IRB preapproval does not cover students accessing patient records for the purpose of the doctoral project analysis. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interviews or Focus Groups</strong></th>
<th>The preapproval does not cover interviews or focus groups.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collection from Patients</strong></td>
<td>The preapproval does not cover posing questions to patients via any method (questionnaires, interviews, focus groups).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Video as Data</strong></td>
<td>The preapproval does not cover filming of events to observe behaviors, study environments and processes, or capture products and/or outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations of specific individuals</strong></td>
<td>The preapproval does not include collection of observational data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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This manual and its appendices may not be modified without prior approval from the IRB. Please submit proposed revisions to IRB@mail.waldenu.edu.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Site Approval Documentation for Staff Education
Doctoral Project

Partner Site
Contact Information
Date

The doctoral student, [Insert Student Name], is involved in Staff Education that will be conducted under the auspices of our organization. The student is approved to collect formative and summative evaluation data via anonymous staff questionnaires, and is also approved to analyze internal, de-identified site records that I deem appropriate to release for the student’s doctoral project. This approval to use our organization’s data pertains only to this doctoral project and not to the student’s future scholarly projects or research (which would need a separate request for approval).

I understand that, as per DNP program requirements, the student will publish a scholarly report of this Staff Development Project in ProQuest as a doctoral capstone (with site and individual identifiers withheld), as per the following ethical standards:

a. In all reports (including drafts shared with peers and faculty members), the student is required to maintain confidentiality by removing names and key pieces of evidence/data that might disclose the organization’s identity or an individual’s identity or inappropriately divulge proprietary details. If the organization itself wishes to publicize the findings of this project, that will be the organization’s judgment call.

b. The student will be responsible for complying with our organization’s policies and requirements regarding data collection (including the need for the site IRB review/approval, if applicable).

c. Via a Consent Form for Anonymous Questionnaires, the student will describe to staff members how the data will be used in the doctoral project and how the stakeholders’ autonomy and privacy will be protected.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve these activities in this setting.

Signed,

Site’s Authorization Official Name (to be determined by site)
Title
Name of Partner Site
APPENDIX B

Consent Form for Anonymous Questionnaires

To be given to the staff member prior to collecting questionnaire responses—note that obtaining a “consent signature” is not appropriate for this type of questionnaire and providing respondents with anonymity is required.

You are invited to take part in an evaluation for the staff education doctoral project that I am conducting.

Questionnaire Procedures:
If you agree to take part, I will be asking you to provide your responses anonymously, to help reduce bias and any sort of pressure to respond a certain way. Staff members’ questionnaire responses will be analyzed as part of my doctoral project, along with any archival data, reports, and documents that the organization’s leadership deems fit to share.

Voluntary Nature of the Project:
This project is voluntary. If you decide to join the project now, you can still change your mind later.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Project:
Being in this project would not pose any risks beyond those of typical daily professional activities. This project’s aim is to provide data and insights to support the organization’s success.

Privacy:
I might know that you completed a questionnaire but I will not know who provided which responses. Any reports, presentations, or publications related to this study will share general patterns from the data, without sharing the identities of individual respondents or partner organization(s). The questionnaire data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by my university.

Contacts and Questions:
If you want to talk privately about your rights in relation to this project, you can call my university’s Advocate via the phone number 612-312-1210. Walden University’s ethics approval number for this study is (Student will need to complete Form A in order to obtain an ethics approval number).

Before you start the questionnaire, please share any questions or concerns you might have. Please only complete the questionnaire if you consent to participating as described as above.