School of Nursing Practicum Manual

Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)
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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Manual

Welcome to the field experience component of Walden University’s Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program. This manual describes the structure and timing of the classroom-based and on-site course practicum experiences and the policies students must follow to be successful. For more information about the nursing programs, students should refer to the School of Nursing Handbook.

This manual is intended to provide DNP students with the information they need related to practicum policies and procedures and the DNP project. This manual also is intended to serve as a reference for practicum preceptors and other personnel involved in the practicum and the DNP project.

This manual refers to the Walden University Catalog and the Walden University Student Handbook for specific information on university policies and courses. These resources can be accessed at catalog.WaldenU.edu.

Note: Walden University reserves the right to make program changes as needed to ensure the highest quality program.

Walden University

The DNP program at Walden University is designed to promote Walden University’s vision, mission, and ongoing commitment to social change. These guiding principles serve as a framework for the program curriculum and outcomes and are included here as a reference.

Vision

Walden University envisions a distinctively different 21st-century learning community where knowledge is judged worthy to the degree that it can be applied by its graduates to the immediate solutions of critical societal challenges, thereby advancing the greater global good.

Mission

Walden University provides a diverse community of career professionals with the opportunity to transform themselves as scholar-practitioners so that they can effect positive social change.

Social Change

Walden University defines positive social change as a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies. Positive social change results in the improvement of human and social conditions.
School of Nursing

Vision
The School of Nursing envisions recognition as a preeminent 21st-century school of nursing in which the contributions of nursing, health, and related sciences will transform the provision of nursing services along the continuum of care and across the human life span to meet the needs of individuals and local and global communities.

Mission
The School of Nursing provides academically rigorous and culturally and contextually relevant educational programs, based on the scholar-practitioner model, for a diverse array of nursing professionals seeking enhancement of critical-thinking skills, abilities to select and implement evidence-based practices, and core and specialty nursing knowledge in order to transform society.

Goals
The goals of the School of Nursing at Walden are to:
1. Empower nursing professionals through academic advancement that enhances personal growth, professional development, and academic achievement.
2. Create an educational environment where learners are able to build on their existing transformational and professional nursing knowledge, skills, and integrative abilities.
3. Educate nursing professionals with consideration for the complex needs of the diverse learner while upholding professional nursing standards.
4. Encourage learners to integrate biopsychosocial, nursing and health theories, research, and evidence-based practice that exemplify professional nursing standards.
5. Prepare professional nursing leaders who are empowered to promote social change for individuals, groups, and organizations locally, nationally, and globally.

DNP Program Outcomes
At the end of the DNP program, students will be able to
1. Translate research findings to direct evidence-based nursing practice.
2. Develop organizational system changes for quality improvement in healthcare delivery in response to local and/or global community needs.
3. Apply optimal utilization of healthcare information technology across healthcare settings.
4. Advocate for the advancement of nursing and healthcare policy through sharing of science-based knowledge with healthcare policy makers.
5. Demonstrate leadership to facilitate collaborative teams for improving patient and population health outcomes.
6. Utilize advanced nursing practice knowledge to implement methodologies to improve population health outcomes.
7. Establish a foundation for lifelong learning and for continual elevation of contributions to the field of nursing through active involvement in professional organizations and/or other professional bodies.
Field Experience Terms

For the purposes of this manual, the following terms are defined in this way:

**Practicum**

A *practicum* is a distinctly defined supervised on-site experience in which students implement knowledge and skills acquired in coursework and integrate professional knowledge in a real healthcare context.

DNP students are required to complete four practicum courses (NURS 8410 - Best Practices in Nursing Specialties, NURS 8400 - Evidence-Based Practice I: Assessment and Design, NURS 8500 - Evidence-Based Practice II: Planning and Implementation, and NURS 8510 - Evidence-Based Practice III: Implementation, Evaluation, and Dissemination), spending a minimum total of 576 field experience hours in those courses.

In total, DNP students are required to have 1,000 post-baccalaureate supervised practice hours to graduate from the program. Students who do not enter the program with 424 supervised practice hours from Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) or other nursing programs may obtain additional practicum hours through NURS 8600 - DNP Field Experience (see Section 5). These practicum requirements must be successfully completed prior to graduation.

**Practicum Site**

A *practicum site* is a setting that enables students to increase the depth of knowledge of the DNP roles directly related to the area of specialization, where students have applied practice experiences (no direct hands-on care) under the supervision of a preceptor, consistent with their education and training. Officials at practicum sites enter into an Affiliation Agreement with Walden University, stating that they will provide appropriate support and supervision for students during the practicum experience. Virtual sites are not allowed for practicum courses.

**Supervision**

*Supervision* by a preceptor is composed of a tutorial and mentoring form of instruction in which practicum preceptors monitor students’ activities in the practicum and facilitate learning and skill-development experiences. Preceptors guide students and provide feedback on their practicum work.

**Field Experience Roles**

**Preceptors**

Preceptors are qualified individuals within a practicum site who are responsible for helping to shape the students’ practicum experience (see Preceptor Requirements). Preceptors should be employed by the field site. Walden expects preceptors to be accessible to students and to provide guidance and feedback that promotes growth of knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with Walden’s educational goals, as well as with preferred practices in healthcare. Preceptors
provide guidance appropriate to students’ roles in their practicum sites, including ongoing feedback about the students’ progress in meeting practicum goals.

**Students**

Students at Walden are considered to be adult learners who are capable of seeking educational opportunities to meet their personal and professional goals. Walden expects students to collaborate with faculty members and be self-directed to meet educational requirements. Students work with faculty members, clinical instructors, and preceptors to ensure they obtain a well-rounded educational experience.

Students are expected to adhere to the following:

- Develop a learning contract to meet course objectives and outcomes for the practicum.
- Adhere to the learning contract as established by the student, faculty member, and preceptor.
- Comply with the policies and protocols established by the practicum site.
- Seek direct and indirect supervision from the faculty member and preceptor.
- Be appropriately prepared for each practicum experience.
- Incorporate theory and research into practicum practice to provide evidence-based care to patients.
- Provide safe, competent, and quality care under the supervision of the preceptor.
- Conduct one’s self in an ethical and professional manner at all times.
- Use acquired knowledge and clinical skills for the appropriate practicum setting.
- Use various educational resources to provide evidence-based care to patients.
- Be on time and be prepared for each practicum session.
- Develop a clear and concise plan to meet course outcomes.
- Be respectful and professional.
- Participate in regular conferences with the faculty member.
- Seek regular feedback from the faculty member and preceptor about progress in the practicum setting.
- Adhere to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines at all times.
- Maintain a practicum journal, logs, and other pertinent practicum records as required by the faculty member and/or preceptor.
- Be adaptable and flexible learners.
- Evaluate the course, practicum experience, and preceptor.
- Develop long-term and short-term goals during the program.
- Participate in group and individual conferences.
- Complete the required hours needed for the didactic and practicum portions of the courses.
- Complete all course assignments satisfactorily.
- Contact the faculty member and practicum site if unable to attend a practicum experience.
- Use critical-thinking skills and sound judgment in providing patient care.

**Students With Disabilities**

The School of Nursing at Walden will not discriminate on the basis of disability and is committed to providing all qualified students with disabilities equal access to its programs,
services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

In postsecondary education, it is the students’ responsibility to self-identify disability status and register with the Office of Disability Services prior to requesting accommodations. To register, students should submit documentation of disability along with Walden’s Accommodation Request Form to disability@mail.waldenu.edu.

The process and form are available from the Office of Disability Services. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations to access field experiences, such as a practicum and/or internship, should register with the Office of Disability Services prior to registering for those field experiences and clarify their specific accommodation needs. In most cases, field experience sites have their own systems for ensuring equal access for employees/interns with disabilities. The Office of Disability Services will help address any gaps in those systems.

Practicum Course Faculty Members

Walden nursing faculty members who are doctorally prepared teach the didactic portion of each practicum course, manage the practicum experience, grade student work related to the practicum experience, and bear the responsibility for assigning the final grade for the course and communicating with preceptors regarding the successful mastery of all competencies. Practicum course faculty members collaborate with students and inform the DNP program director about any difficulties that arise during the practicum experience. The faculty member teaching the practicum course serves as the supervisor for the preceptor related to student practicum activities, per the course’s practicum requirements.

Field Experience Coordinators

Field experience coordinators are Walden employees who help students understand the practicum policies and procedures. They answer questions about the practicum application and preceptor approval process, review materials to ensure that students have completed all required application and documentation steps, and work collaboratively with the program director throughout the approval process. Once practicum applications have been approved, the field experience coordinators ensure that students are enrolled in their appropriate practicum course. Field experience coordinators are assigned to students by region and are available to students via e-mail, phone, or appointment. Students can find their field experience coordinator online at https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus.

Program Director

The program director is a Walden faculty member whose primary role is to manage and continuously improve a degree program. The program director’s role in the DNP practicum experience is to approve preceptor nominations and oversee the overall experience. The program director also approves and assigns members of the DNP project committee (see the DNP project section of this document for more information). The program director supports students throughout the DNP program, including during the practicum.
Working Together

Walden’s program directors, field experience coordinators, and practicum course faculty members are committed to working collaboratively with students and preceptors to support successful completion of practicum experiences.

Process for Mentoring and Evaluation of Students

The practicum process is collegial, with the recognition that students are adult learners who are capable of critical self-reflection, open to constructive feedback, and responsible for their own learning. Expectations for practicum performance correlates with the stage of the students’ learning (i.e., greater practicum expertise is anticipated as students progress through the program).

Once students enroll in a practicum course, they are mentored and evaluated by a preceptor and a Walden practicum course faculty member. Preceptors provide the experiences, supervise students, and provide evaluations to the practicum course faculty members. Practicum course faculty members grade students’ coursework and, in general, return students’ written work within Walden guidelines on returning grades. Students are encouraged to consult with practicum course faculty members by phone or e-mail about their progress throughout the quarter as stipulated in the course syllabus.

Practicum course faculty members also maintain contact with students and preceptors throughout the quarter to determine whether the students’ learning needs are being met at their practicum site and to monitor students’ clinical progress. This culminates in a practicum evaluation that is completed by the preceptor, in Meditrek®, toward the end of the quarter and submitted for review and final grading to the practicum course faculty member.

Field Experience Regulatory Requirements

State Requirements

The ability for students to complete a required practicum in each state depends upon the statutes and regulations of that state. It is the students’ responsibility to know and understand the statutes and regulations of that state and whether completion of the required practicum is permitted. Students should inform the School of Nursing Office of Field Experience (Office of Field Experience) when moving to another state to ensure successful completion of practicum is permitted.

Special Note for DNP Students in Minnesota

Walden’s School of Nursing program is aware that certain Minnesota-based health systems have instituted limits on the number and types of students who may participate in clinical field experiences at their member institutions. Students who reside in Minnesota may experience challenges in locating clinical field experiences in their desired location and the clinical specialty required for their program. It is important that residents of Minnesota understand their ability to secure a required clinical internship in their area may be affected. Given these limitations, students in Minnesota are encouraged to begin coordinating a practicum site in accordance with the process outlined in the practicum manual several terms prior to the time of their scheduled
field experience, to increase their opportunity to secure the required field experience(s) in their area.

**Special Note for DNP Students in Washington**

Walden University is approved by the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission to provide practice experiences in Washington State for a Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing (RN-BSN and RN-BSN-MSN track), Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) with a specialization in Nursing Education, Nursing Informatics, Leadership and Management, Family Nurse Practitioner, Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner, and Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, as well as the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program.

For more information, go to the following website: http://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/NursingCommission/NursingPrograms.aspx.

**Attention students completing practicum in Washington State:** Please be aware of the following Washington Administrative Code (WAC 246-840-533(6)) requirement: a preceptor in graduate nursing programs must be experienced in the specialty area for at least 2 years; and not be related to, or a personal friend of, the student.

**State Board Requirements**

Some state boards of nursing have additional approval requirements. Because of these additional state board requirements and approvals, students who will engage in practicum experiences in the following states must submit their applications via Meditrek® at least one full quarter prior to starting their practicum course as late applications will not be accepted for these states:

- **Alabama:** http://www.abn.alabama.gov/nursing-programs/#tab-outofstate
- **Alaska:** https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/cbpl/ProfessionalLicensing/BoardofNursing.aspx (Please be aware that Alaska Board of Nursing requires students to submit a form to the Alaska Board of Nursing. The Office of Field Experience can provide a copy of the Alaska Board of Nursing form)
- **North Dakota:** https://www.ndbon.org/
- **Rhode Island:** http://www.health.ri.gov/partners/boards/nurseregistrationandnursingeducation/
- **Tennessee:** https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/health-professional-boards/nursing-board/nursing-board/about.html
- **Wyoming:** https://nursing-online.state.wy.us/Default.aspx?page=57

**Non-U.S.-Based Student Requirements**

To be approved for the field experience, non-U.S.-based students must adhere to the following:

- Students must choose preceptors who hold a graduate degree from an academic institution recognized or accredited by the competent authorities in the country where students wish to complete their field experience. Preceptors must be experts in the specialization fields students have chosen. Preceptors’ expertise should be
documented in the résumés or curriculum vitae (CVs) that students include with their practicum application. Preceptors must be licensed within the country where the practicum experience will occur.

- Students with field sites outside of the United States may petition for an exception if it is determined that professional liability insurance is too costly or does not exist in the country where the student will be conducting the practicum. An exception for obtaining professional liability insurance can be authorized by completing a Professional Liability Insurance Waiver Request. The waiver request form can be obtained from the Office of Field Experience and must be submitted to the Office of Field Experience. The form must be completed by an authorized representative, not the student. Submission of the waiver request does not guarantee an approval.
- Students must provide evidence of current and active nurse licensure where the practicum will take place. The licensure must authorize the student to conduct practice at a level consistent with RN licensure in the United States. If you encounter issues with obtaining proof of licensure, they should contact the Office of Field Experience.
- Students must comply with all other requirements demanded of U.S. students.
- Students should contact nursing field experience coordinators early to ensure that they have found an acceptable preceptor and meet all the other requirements.

**Licensure Review**

The Office of Field Experience will conduct a routine professional license verification search and review as part of the practicum application process. This search and review will be completed for all students applying for practicum and all candidates for preceptorship. Information for this review will be gathered through NURSYS®, state boards of nursing, state medical boards, or any other applicable professional credentialing authority. Any information that is attached to a professional license verification will be reviewed by the School of Nursing’s Licensure and Compliance department. The information that will be reviewed includes past and present credentialing information, such as state licensing board orders, consent agreements, letters of reprimand or censure, complaints, malpractice claims, settlements, and awards or other indication of action taken against the license by the professional credentialing authority.

This information will be reviewed as part of the application and preceptor approval process. Practicum applications will not be approved until this review has been completed.

If students have a past or present order, consent agreement, letter of reprimand, censure or complaint, or any other information issued by the professional credentialing authority regarding the student’s’ professional license, the students will be required to inform their field site and preceptor of this information. The field site and preceptor will need to confirm that the students will be able to complete the field experience at the site prior to the approval of their practicum application. Written documentation from the field site and preceptor, which confirms that (a) the field site is aware of the past or present board issued information (as described previously) and (b) the field site has agreed to accommodate the practicum placement, must be submitted to the Office of Field Experience.
Please be aware that preceptor licensure is also reviewed by the Office of Field Experience for approval. The process is very similar to the student license review and includes review of current and past actions.

**Note:** If the status of a student’s RN license changes at any point after the student is admitted/enrolled into a nursing program, it is the student’s responsibility to inform the director of Compliance and Licensure (nurslicensure@mail.waldenu.edu). Status changes, such as actions or restrictions placed on a student’s RN license, can affect the student’s ability to engage in practicum.
SECTION 2. DNP PRACTICUM

Overview

Walden’s DNP program provides students with the opportunity to earn a doctoral degree in nursing practice. Walden offers a flexible, relevant, evidence-based program of study that prepares experts in advanced specialty nursing knowledge and skills for healthcare practice. The program provides rich and varied opportunities in practice settings aimed at assisting graduates to achieve the required outcomes and competencies for advanced specialty practice. Graduates engage in practice in such areas as administrative, informatics, leadership/management, and population-based specialties, and they focus their practice on aggregates, such as populations, systems, organizations, and state or national policies. These specialties do not have direct patient care responsibilities but must define actual or emerging issues and design appropriate aggregate health interventions (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2006).

The practicum experience helps students deepen their specialty area practice knowledge as they continue to enhance their leadership and nursing skills. To achieve this, students develop and engage in a relationship with an approved preceptor. During the practicum, students focus on skills at the aggregate, systems, and organizational levels; the achievement of individualized learning objectives; and the building and assimilating of advanced specialty practice knowledge as conceptualized by students and their preceptor and approved by their practicum course faculty member. The practicum requires students to apply the knowledge, concepts, and competencies that they have acquired during their program of study, particularly in relation to their area of nursing specialization. During the practicum, students undertake a course assignment that gives them an opportunity to engage in and provide leadership for evidence-based practice in their chosen practice setting.

The primary objective of the practicum is to “build and assimilate knowledge for advanced specialty practice at a high level of complexity” (AACN, 2006, p. 19). Students should, therefore, focus on expanding their specialty practice knowledge at the aggregate level and their socialization to roles they are interested in occupying after the completion of the DNP program, as described in the following examples:

- **Leadership and management students:** If students practice nursing as a nurse-manager, they should seek to learn about and gain experience pertaining to organizational and system issues in healthcare.

- **Nursing informatics students:** After finding a preceptor in informatics, students might focus their new knowledge and expertise on community-, system- or organization-wide information systems development and implementation in a healthcare setting.

- **Advanced practice nursing students:** After finding a preceptor in their specialty area, students may focus their practicum experience on developing and applying new knowledge and expertise in their specialty area along with expanding their responsibilities for managing the care of individuals, families, and communities within systems or organizations. In addition, students may examine the following areas based on their area of expertise: practice trends, possible systemic changes to improve healthcare quality and safety at the organizational or policy level, or improvements in evidence-based practice settings.
Note: The practicum experience should not include any direct, hands-on patient care or be at an academic site.

Required Activities

Students must satisfactorily complete all the requirements of the practicum courses (Table 1) in accordance with the information provided in the course syllabi. The DNP practicum consists of a series of four courses, which are taken one per term in the following sequence. The courses cannot be taken concurrently and must be taken in the prescribed sequence.

Table 1. DNP Practicum Courses, Prerequisites, and Hours

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<th>Practicum Course</th>
<th>Prerequisites</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NURS 8410 - Best Practices in Nursing Specialties (didactic—4 cr.; practicum—1 cr.)</td>
<td>NURS 8000, 8110, 8200, 8210</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>NURS 8400 - Evidence-Based Practice I: Assessment and Design (didactic—4 cr.; practicum—1 cr.)</td>
<td>NURS 8410</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NURS 8500 - Evidence-Based Practice II: Planning and Implementation (practicum—3 cr.)</td>
<td>NURS 8400, 8410</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>NURS 8510 - Evidence-Based Practice III: Implementation, Evaluation, and Dissemination (practicum—3 cr.)</td>
<td>All general courses: NURS 8400, 8410, 8500</td>
<td>216</td>
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</table>

Total practicum hours: 576

During these four terms, students complete the didactic portion of the courses online and accumulate a minimum of 576 practicum hours in a site-based experience. Students must receive a grade of Satisfactory (S) for the practicum components to successfully pass each course. They earn five quarter credits for NURS 8410 - Best Practices in Nursing Specialties and NURS 8400 - Evidence-Based Practice I: Assessment and Design and three quarter credits for NURS 8500 - Evidence-Based Practice II: Planning and Implementation and NURS 8510 - Evidence-Based Practice III: Implementation, Evaluation, and Dissemination and receive a letter grade on a standard 4.0 grading scale for each course.

Individualized Learning Objectives

Walden expects that the practicum experience will allow students to focus on developing and expanding their advanced nursing knowledge and skills at the aggregate, organizational, or policy level and will allow students to integrate a range of skills into a coherent professional identity as a nurse scholar-practitioner. General practicum objectives and outcomes are aligned with course and program objectives and outcomes. In addition, students are asked to set specific goals for their practicum experience that are consistent with their professional preparation and coursework. These goals will inform the evaluation of students’ competencies at the end of the
practicum courses. These individualized learning objectives are developed by the students related to their areas of specialization and the relevant issues identified to engage within the healthcare environment and are intended to articulate with course objectives and outcomes.

In the first week of NURS 8410, students will be asked—based on their previous assignments, experiences, practice setting(s), and interests—to formulate two to three individualized learning objectives that they wish to achieve during their practicum experience. As students approach their practicum, they should reflect on their coursework and identify two to three areas in which they feel the need for further growth in their area of specialization. There are myriad areas and activities in which students can participate. Students should discuss the areas they have identified with their preceptors and ascertain if the necessary resources are available at their practicum sites. Finally, students should prepare a set of measurable learning objectives, using Bloom’s Taxonomy, that specifies what they seek to achieve in their practicum experience. Practicum course faculty members will review and approve students’ self-developed learning objectives.

Practicum Guidelines

- Within the practicum, students should define actual and emerging problems as they relate to aggregate systems in the delivery of healthcare. What are the key problems or issues related to the students’ specialization? Students may consult the literature as well as their preceptor and practicum-setting leaders.
- Students should review current professional practice standards as identified in coursework and determine those they would like to address during their practicum.

Completing Practicum Hours

Students must complete a minimum of 576 hours of combined advanced specialty practice and course assignment hours during the practicum. They may start logging practicum hours during the first week of NURS 8410 provided that they have received a practicum approval notice from the Office of Field Experience. Students may not log any hours before the start of the course or before they receive approval. All practicum hours must be completed by the end of Week 10 of NURS 8510. Students may log hours independently as not all 576 hours need to be completed with the preceptor.

The practicum experience assists students in deepening their specialty area practice knowledge as they continue to enhance their leadership and nursing skills. To achieve this, they develop and engage in a relationship with an approved preceptor and they focus on

- Acquiring skills at the aggregate, systems, and organizational level;
- Achieving individualized learning objectives; and
- Building and assimilating advanced specialty practice knowledge as conceptualized by themselves, their preceptors, and their practicum faculty members and approved by their individual practicum faculty members.

The practicum experience and didactic course assignments provide an opportunity for students to apply advanced knowledge and leadership skills in the development of practicum projects at the organizational level. NURS 8410 requires that students evaluate an evidence-based practice problem or issue within a specialty setting and formulate an intervention to address the problem. NURS 8500 assignments focus on planning and implementing a program/project design to
address their clinical/practice questions. All work is completed under the guidance of an approved clinical preceptor at the practicum site.

Practicum courses and the corresponding course assignments are separate from the scholarly DNP project. Students are encouraged to begin work on the DNP project after completing NURS 8110 - Theoretical and Scientific Foundations for Nursing with a goal of earlier project completion (see Section 4). Students who are in the DNP project implementation phase during a practicum course may apply a maximum of one third of the total number of each practicum course’s hours on project implementation. The primary focus of practicum hours should be on achieving the goals and individualized learning objectives set for the practicum experience. Activities such as reviewing literature, writing project papers, and preparing other course assignments may not be included as part of the practicum hours.

The following activities count toward the required 576 practicum hours:
- Activities that are directly related to the completion of practicum goals, self-directed and course objectives, and learning outcomes
- Implementation activities related to the DNP course assignments (NURS 8410, NURS 8500)
- Working with aggregates: populations, organizations, systems, or state- and/or national policy-level goals to define actual and emerging problems and to design aggregate-level health interventions

The following activities are not included as practicum hours:
- Travel time related to the practicum
- Communication such as e-mails and phone calls, unless conferencing, meeting, or conducting practicum or course project-related communications
- Review of literature, library work, or development of the written document related to the DNP project
- Writing and editing assignments related to the didactic portion of the practicum courses
- Hands-on patient care

Note: A minimum total of 1,000 practice hours are required to graduate from the DNP program, 576 of which will accrue during the practicum experience. Up to 424 hours may be transferred in from master’s nursing programs, as applicable. Students who did not transfer at least 424 practice hours may complete additional hours as necessary in NURS 8600.

Conference Calls

In Week 2, students schedule a call with their preceptor and practicum course faculty member to discuss the practicum experience (Note: Students are responsible for coordinating and scheduling this call). During the call, the practicum learning objectives and required practicum hours will be discussed. This is a collaborative process among the faculty member, preceptor, and student. Before the call, students should talk with their preceptor about potential projects. Students write their practicum learning objectives in Week 1 of the course; practicum course faculty members will approve students’ self-developed learning objectives after the call, by the end of Week 2.
The conference call is intended to ensure that
- The practicum goals are being addressed,
- Students and preceptors understand the key points of the practicum experience,
- An opportunity for questions is provided, and
- Problems are identified and addressed.

A second conference call with the preceptor and the practicum course faculty member occurs at the end of each practicum course.

**Journal and Time Log**

**Journal**

Students must periodically submit a journal entry (three times during each practicum course) discussing how they are achieving the objectives of the practicum experience. These objectives include the overall course objectives as well as students’ individualized learning objectives for the practicum and any project objectives developed by the students.

The purpose of this journal is to identify activities, issues, or problems that show how students are increasing their knowledge in their nursing practice specialization. Drawing from theoretical constructs learned in coursework and content related to their specialization, practicum learning objectives, and competencies, students should analyze their practicum experience with an eye toward connecting their experiences with relevant literature and any relevant concepts, models, or theories.

Students reflect on their practicum experiences in a one-page journal entry (250–300 words) unless directed otherwise; see Week 1 of your Blackboard clinical course for more details. Entries should include APA-style citations and references where appropriate. Students will continue adding to their journal, creating a cumulative log of the practicum experience. This comprehensive journal will be submitted for each journal submission assignment. Students should review feedback and correct any errors identified so as not to include the same mistakes on subsequent submissions.

**Time Log**

Using Meditrek®, students keep a log of the time they spend in practicum activities. Each log entry must be linked with an individual practicum learning objective, a course objective, a project objective, or a graduate program objective. Students should track their hours in Meditrek® as they are completed. Students enter time logs in Meditrek® the same weeks that journal entries are required (three times during each practicum course). Preceptors sign off on the time logs at the end of the course after the completion of hours. Students are not permitted to sign off on time logs on behalf of preceptors.

The time log must include the following:
- Faculty
- Preceptor
- Week
- Dates
- Total hours for the week
- Activities/comments—a brief description of what students did or observed during each time interval
- Student learning objectives—objectives that relate to each time interval and the documented practicum activities
- Course outcomes addressed

**Note:** Preceptors and field sites are populated in Meditrek® for drop-down options in time logs at the end of Week 1 for approved applications. If an application is approved after the course starts, the preceptor and field site will be populated weekly on Fridays. If students are unable to find their preceptor or field site in the drop-down box more than a week after application approval, they should e-mail nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu

**Performance Evaluation**

At the end of each course—NURS 8410, 8400, 8500, and 8510—preceptors provide a formal evaluation of students’ practicum performance and DNP course assignment within Meditrek®.

During the quarter, practicum course faculty members monitor students’ activities, which the students record in their time logs, journal entries, and posted discussions, related to their accomplishment of the individualized practicum objectives. Faculty members also conduct conference calls and ensure that preceptors have completed performance evaluations of students.

Preceptors communicate students’ progress to the practicum course faculty members as needed during the practicum and through an evaluation at the end of the course. Students complete a clinical self-evaluation at the end of the practicum experience, along with an evaluation of the entire process. Throughout the course, preceptors and faculty members communicate as needed by e-mail and phone to meet the needs of the individual student.

At the end of each practicum course (i.e., NURS 8410, 8400, 8500, and 8510), students and preceptors are required to provide formal feedback by completing an evaluation of their performance and experience in Meditrek®. By Week 8, both students and preceptors will receive an e-mail from Meditrek® with directions on how to log in and complete an evaluation. Students will use the same user name and password provided to them for the application submission. Preceptors will receive new login information or be reminded of their login information if they had a previous student. Evaluations are due Week 10. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure the preceptor has received login credentials, signed logs and completed evaluation by the course deadline. Students should contact the Office of Field Experience if the preceptor has not received an e-mail with access to Meditrek® after Week 3.

These evaluations will not only provide information about the progress of individual students but also will help program leadership continuously improve the courses and the practicum experience as a whole. Students will receive a grade of Incomplete (I) if any of the evaluations are not received by the posted deadlines.
SECTION 3. PRECEPTOR AND FIELD SITE INFORMATION

Finding a Practicum Site and Preceptor

Students should read this manual and refer to the practicum application resources to begin the practicum process. Walden provides guidelines for how to choose a preceptor as well as a practicum site; however, because Walden students are located around the world, they have the flexibility to secure their own sites based on their region/location. Students will select a practicum site and initiate contact with a potential preceptor who meets the qualifications and may be interested in working with them.

Students are encouraged to start the search process for a field site and preceptor early in the program as it takes time to secure a field site. Students should have a preceptor nominee and a practicum site identified early in their program.

A completed application must be submitted via Meditrek® by the practicum application deadline date (refer to Application Deadlines—Tables 2 and 3). The student must submit the application in Meditrek® in order for the application to be reviewed and processed. Applications in incomplete status will not be reviewed.

Tips for Practicum Site and Preceptor Search

Securing a practicum site and preceptor can be as intensive as a job search. The following tips are recommended for students when they are beginning the search process. Students should

- Contact Career Services to update their résumés and cover letters with a focus on finding a practicum field site. Career Services can also provide mock interviews to prepare students for speaking with potential preceptors. The Career Services website can be found at: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/careerservices/home.
- Contact the education department of possible field sites within their area or region.
- Review the field site list in Meditrek®. Instructions to access the field site list are located on the Office of Field Experience website https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/appropriatepreceptors. This is a list of field sites that Walden University School of Nursing students have used in the past; it doesn’t necessarily mean that the site will be able to accommodate each student or that an active Affiliation Agreement is on file, but it is a good place to start.
- Use their professional and personal network to make connections. Develop a profile on professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn) to network; research field sites; connect with colleagues, alumni of Walden, and a variety of other professional nursing related groups.
- Research professional nursing associations and organizations to find preceptor resources.
- Contact their state board of nursing to see if they have a list of available preceptors or resources.
- Schedule an appointment with their regional nursing field experience coordinator or field experience coordinator to discuss other tips and ideas for securing a preceptor and field site. Students can schedule an appointment online at
https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus. Please keep in mind that the field experience coordinator cannot place students at a site but may have further advice for students.

- Schedule an appointment with their program coordinator (contact information listed in Section 9). Program coordinators cannot place students at a site but may be able to offer suggestions or advice on potential preceptors or practicum experiences.

**Choosing a Site**

Student considerations when choosing a practicum site:

- Opportunity to advance knowledge and area of specialization
- Preceptor’s knowledge and area of expertise
- Specific learning objectives for the practicum experience
- Ability of the site to provide a variety of advanced learning experiences
- Opportunity to enhance leadership/professional skills

Students may complete the practicum where they work (e.g., hospital, nursing home, health organization, clinic, health department, or other health-related organization); however, the experience must be

- In a different setting than their usual assigned employment role or work area(s);
- Completed outside of their normal working hours; and
- Under the direction of a preceptor who is not their immediate supervisor and who does not report to them.

The practicum site cannot be completed in a school of nursing or other nursing education setting or in a private care or private home setting.

**Choosing a Preceptor**

Students must identify a potential preceptor and determine if the individual is interested in working with them. If so, they must find out whether this individual meets the qualifications to serve as preceptor. Students should contact the nursing field experience coordinators early by e-mailing nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu to obtain feedback about whether the candidate is an acceptable preceptor.

**Preceptor Requirements**

The preceptor must be involved in healthcare or have experience and expertise in the practice setting relevant to the student’s area of interest. Additionally, the preceptor must currently work in a role consistent with the students’ goals for the practicum experience. Doctoral education is preferred; however, some other form of graduate education may be acceptable if the preceptor’s experience and responsibility are clearly related to the student’s practicum goals (e.g., a senior administrator for a student interested in leadership and management).

*Note:* It is not always necessary that the preceptor be a professional nurse or have the DNP or PhD credential. Under circumstances in which the DNP student’s areas of expertise intersect with a more interdisciplinary focus, the preceptor may, for example, be an industry leader, a policymaker, a physician, or an informatics specialist.
The preceptor should not be providing direct patient care. The student may work with a clinician as a preceptor, but solely when there is a focus on organizational change. Examples include focusing on system issues, organizational or healthcare delivery changes, technology in healthcare, a focus on work flow in the healthcare setting, etc.

Prior to approval, the preceptor’s licensure and certification (if applicable) is verified and the curriculum vitae is evaluated by the Office of Field Experience, with final approval by the program director. Approval of the preceptor is based on the following criteria:

- A licensed, credentialed nurse with a minimum of an earned MSN degree (a doctoral degree is preferred) from an accredited university.

There may be situations when a practicing nurse with appropriate credentials and/or expertise in the student’s identified area is not available. If that situation occurs, then another health-related, non-nurse individual with expertise and credentials that align with the area of student goals and objectives and practicum course learning outcomes could serve in the preceptor role provided that the candidate

- Demonstrates experience and current position in the area needed for guidance, support, and mentorship in the achievement of the student’s goals and objectives.
- Demonstrates a commitment to provide the student with experience in their area of interest.
- Is employed at the field site where practicum takes place.
- Is not a relative or significant other.
- Is not the student’s direct or immediate supervisor.
- Has a minimum of 1 year of experience in area of specialization.
- Is not a nurse educator working in the capacity of a nurse educator for an institution of nursing education.
- Must not be another DNP student.

The student may have the same preceptor for NURS 8410, 8400, 8500, and 8510 but is not required.

**Attention students completing practicum in Washington State:** Please be aware of the following Washington Administrative Code (WAC 246-840-533(6)) requirement: a preceptor in graduate nursing programs must be experienced in the specialty area for at least 2 years; and not be related to, or a personal friend of, the student.

A routine professional license verification will be obtained by Walden for all preceptor candidates. Any negative information, both past and present, that is part of the license verification will be reviewed by the School of Nursing’s Licensure and Compliance department. Some examples of negative information are disciplinary orders issued by a professional licensing board, malpractice information and letters of complaint, censure, or reprimand. This information will be reviewed as part of the preceptor approval process and could lead to a determination that the preceptor does not meet the university’s requirements. Students will have the opportunity to appeal the decision or to nominate a replacement preceptor who will undergo the same review. Students should be aware that their practicum application will not be approved until an acceptable preceptor is approved.
Many students find it helpful to review their preceptor’s license information prior to submitting their practicum application. If they choose to review this information, it can be found online through NURSYS® or the corresponding state board of nursing website if the preceptor is a nurse, or by reviewing the preceptor’s license information provided by the preceptor’s professional licensing authority (medical board, department of health, etc.). If students have any questions about this process or any possible negative information regarding a potential preceptor, they should contact nurslicensure@mail.waldenu.edu.

**Note:** Approval of the preceptor must occur prior to the student starting the practicum course and logging hours. Students cannot begin logging practicum hours until their practicum application is fully approved and they have been registered for the course.

### Change of Preceptor

Because circumstances change, sometimes students need to change preceptors before or during their practicum course.

**For Students Who Need to Change Their Preceptor Before Course Begins:**
Students will need to notify the Office of Field Experience as soon as possible if a preceptor changes before the practicum begins so that a new application can be opened by the Office of Field Experience and submitted by the student. If the new preceptor involves a new practicum site, then a new Affiliation Agreement will also be needed, which may delay the practicum experience until a later term.

**For Students Who Need to Change Their Preceptor After Course Begins:**
Students will need to notify the Office of Field Experience and faculty member who is teaching the practicum course so that the faculty member can contact the program director. Students must contact the Office of Field Experience to request a new replacement application be opened in Meditrek®. Students must submit a new replacement application for the new preceptor to be approved. If the new preceptor involves a new practicum site, then it is likely the practicum experience will be delayed.
SECTION 4. DOCTORAL PROJECT—NURS 8700

Overview

The DNP program at Walden University is designed to promote a student’s development as a nurse leader and scholar-practitioner. Pursuant to this outcome, graduates are expected to engage in and provide leadership for evidence-based practice in their chosen practice settings. This requires theoretical, empirical, and experiential application of knowledge, including translation of research to practice, evaluation and improvement of healthcare practice and outcomes, and participation in collaborative scholarship.

The purpose of the DNP project is to guide students in designing, developing, implementing, evaluating, and/or translating as well as subsequently disseminating scholarship that addresses an evidence-based need or problem in their focused area of practice. This guided practical learning experience serves four purposes.

The DNP project
1. Provides students with an opportunity to apply concepts, methods, models, and theories in practice;
2. Provides students mentored practical learning experience addressing needs, problems, or issues relevant to nursing practice using systematic inquiry as nurse scholar-practitioners;
3. Serves to evaluate students’ learning of concepts, knowledge, theories, and competencies as well as their ability to carry out systematic and/or disciplined inquiry to address needs, problems, or issues relevant to nursing practice; and
4. Prepares students to participate in evidence-based scholarship in their roles as nurse leaders and scholar-practitioners.

Ultimately, the DNP project aims to prepare doctoral students with the knowledge and experience to positively impact the quality of healthcare and advance the nursing profession through integration and application of knowledge.

Doctoral students should remember that the DNP project can be no more than one third of the total practicum hour requirements. The major focus of practicum courses and hours is to assist students in achieving specific learning objectives aligned with The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice (AACN, 2006) and specialty competencies for the practicum assignments and not the DNP project. The achievement of the practicum course objectives further synthesizes and expands the learning gained and may provide the context in which the final DNP project is implemented and completed.

The Practicum and Project

There are two elements included in the overall DNP capstone experience: the DNP practicum experience and the DNP project. The two are related in that both are undertaken in authentic healthcare contexts during the DNP curriculum, including both didactic and practicum courses.
The practicum site may provide the impetus for a student DNP project to introduce an evidence-based practice change or a quality improvement initiative. The practicum experience and the DNP project enhance the student’s leadership and nursing skills and both are supervised by an approved practicum preceptor and mentor, if needed.

This section clarifies the relationship between the practicum experience and the DNP project. As stated earlier, the DNP project is completed in NURS 8700 - DNP Project Mentoring, which is taken concurrently with other courses, starting the term after completing NURS 8110. NURS 8701 - DNP Project Completion is an option for students who need additional quarters to complete the DNP project.

The DNP project objectives and outcomes are focused in the mentoring courses, NURS 8700 and NURS 8701. NURS 8700 is a non-credit-bearing course, where students work on the development and implementation of their DNP project. Students nominate a faculty member to serve as DNP project chair. The DNP project chair will mentor and guide each student in the development and implementation of the scholarly DNP project. Students will be assigned to the DNP chair’s section of NURS 8700 each term until project completion. The DNP chair will guide the student on the DNP project process and the requirements for committee review. In addition to the DNP chair, each student will be assigned a committee member and university research reviewer (URR) as members of the DNP project committee. Refer to the DNP program Capstone Resources page for more information on the DNP project.

The practicum experience and course assignments are the focus of the practicum course sequence. Each student has a preceptor from outside of Walden who helps to guide the practicum experience and to assist in the contextualization of the DNP project in terms of its value to the organization in which the practicum is situated and/or the wider scholarly community.

**NURS 8701 - DNP Project Completion Course**

NURS 8701 is specifically for DNP doctoral scholarly project completion. This course is an option for students who need additional quarters to complete the DNP project after completing all didactic courses including the four practicum courses. NURS 8701 is a three-credit course taken continuously until project completion.

Students needing to register for this course may contact Student Success Advising for course registration.
SECTION 5. DNP FIELD EXPERIENCE—NURS 8600

The information in this section is about the NURS 8600 course. This course is **not a requirement for all students but only for those students who need additional hours to achieve the total of 1,000 practice hours for graduation.** Please note these important points:

- NURS 8600 is not part of the DNP practicum or DNP project. The students’ DNP practicum and project implementation are completed during NURS 8410, 8400, 8500, and 8510. Students will complete 576 hours of practicum across these four evidence-based practice courses. Students need a total of 1,000 hours to graduate from the DNP program, 424 of which may be transferred from practicum hours in their MSN program. Students should consult their program of study or contact the Student Success Advising Team to determine whether additional hours are needed. If students need additional hours, they can get them by enrolling for one to six credits of NURS 8600.

- It is the students’ responsibility to review their program of study to determine how many credits have been transferred from their MSN program and how many, if any, credits they will need to achieve the total of 1,000 hours.

- One credit of NURS 8600 equals 72 practicum hours.

- Students may take up to six credits of NURS 8600 by completing the **8600 FE Application** and registering for the course. Students should identify the number of credits they wish to take in each quarter within their 8600 FE application in Meditrek®. The Office of Field Experience will process the course registration upon application approval.

- Students must complete 72 practicum hours for each credit of NURS 8600 for which they register. For example, if students register for three credits of NURS 8600, they will need to complete 216 practicum hours (3 x 72). Students must be sure that they are able to put in the time for the number of credits for which they register.

- Students must submit a petition to register for more than three credits of NURS 8600. Without an approved petition, students can only take up to three credits of NURS 8600 in one quarter.

- Students will need a preceptor and field site for each quarter of NURS 8600.

- Students must submit their application for each term of NURS 8600 by the deadline. The application process is similar to the practicum application process described in this manual.

Select a Site and Preceptor

- Students should choose a site and initiate contact with a potential preceptor who meets the qualifications and may be interested in working with them.

- The NURS 8600 field site may be the same field site that students use for their DNP practicum. The NURS 8600 preceptor may be the DNP practicum preceptor **only if** students are not enrolled in 8600 at the same time as their DNP practicum courses (NURS 8410, 8400, 8500, 8510). If students wish to enroll in NURS 8600 concurrently with NURS 8410, 8400, 8500, or 8510, then they must have a different person as their NURS 8600 preceptor.
• The field site cannot be an education setting (such as a school of nursing), and the preceptor cannot be a nurse educator.

Choosing a Site

NURS 8600 is equivalent to the master’s clinical hours transferred into the program for the 1,000 hours required; therefore, the field experience is not required to be at the doctoral level. Students should consider their career goals after graduation and try to match their NURS 8600 field experience site and preceptor to those career goals. To integrate their education with experience, students must have an opportunity to apply their acquired knowledge, concepts, and skills within the context that they hope to practice as DNP-prepared nurses. To do this, students may need to travel to a setting other than their own practice setting.

Students may complete the practicum where they work (e.g., hospital, nursing home, health organization, university health department, or other health-related organization); however, the experience must be

• In a different setting than their usual assigned employment role or work area(s);
• Completed outside of their normal working hours; and
• Under the direction of a preceptor who is not their immediate supervisor and who does not report to them; and
• Separate from DNP practicum course hours.

The NURS 8600 field experience cannot be completed in a school of nursing or other nursing education setting or in a private care or private home setting.

Choosing a Preceptor

Students must identify a potential preceptor and determine if the individual is interested in working with them. If so, they must find out whether this individual meets the qualifications to serve as preceptor. Students should contact the nursing field experience coordinators early by e-mailing nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu to obtain feedback about whether the candidate is an acceptable preceptor.

Preceptor Requirements

The preceptor must be involved in healthcare or have experience and expertise in the practice setting relevant to the student’s area of interest. Additionally, the preceptor must currently work in a role consistent with the students’ goals for the practicum experience. Doctoral education is preferred; however, some other form of graduate education may be acceptable if the preceptor’s experience and responsibility are clearly related to the student’s practicum goals (e.g., a senior administrator for a student interested in leadership and management).

Note: It is not always necessary that the preceptor be a professional nurse or have the DNP or PhD credential. When the DNP student’s areas of expertise intersect with a more interdisciplinary focus, the preceptor may, for example, be an industry leader, a policymaker, a physician, or an informatics specialist.
Prior to approval, the preceptor’s licensure and certification (if applicable) is verified and the curriculum vitae is evaluated by the Office of Field Experience, with final approval by the program director. Approval of the preceptor is based on the following criteria:

- A licensed, credentialed nurse with a minimum of an earned MSN degree (a doctoral degree is preferred) from an accredited university.

There may be situations when a practicing nurse with appropriate credentials and/or expertise in the student’s identified area is not available. If that situation occurs, then another health-related non-nurse individual with expertise and credentials that align with the area of student goals and objectives and practicum course learning outcomes could serve in the preceptor role.

- Demonstrates experience and current position in the area needed for guidance, support, and mentorship in the achievement of the student’s goals and objectives.
- Demonstrates a commitment to provide the student with experience in their area of interest.
- Is employed at the field site where practicum takes place.
- Is not a relative or significant other.
- Is not the student’s direct or immediate supervisor.
- Has a minimum of 1 year of experience in area of specialization.
- Is not a nurse educator working in the capacity of a nurse educator for an institution of nursing education.
- Must not be another DNP student.

Note: Approval of the preceptor must occur prior to the student starting NURS 8600 and logging hours.

Attention students completing practicum in Washington State: Please be aware of the following Washington Administrative Code (WAC 246-840-533(6)) requirement: a preceptor in graduate nursing programs must be experienced in the specialty area for at least 2 years; and not be related to, or a personal friend of, the student.

Note: Students should follow the process outlined in Section 6 for completing and submitting an application for NURS 8600.
SECTION 6. APPLICATION PROCESS

Application Deadlines

The deadline for submitting a practicum application is the first day of the quarter preceding the quarter that the students wish to begin the practicum, as shown in Tables 2 and 3. Students must be sure that they understand the deadline. For example, if students plan to enroll in a practicum course in the fall quarter, their practicum application is due by the first day of the summer quarter. An application received after the due date will be considered a late application.

Students must submit a separate application for each field site and preceptor every quarter, subject to the same deadlines listed above, even if the field site and preceptor remain the same. Students will not be registered for practicum courses if there is not an approved application on file.

Students’ program of study allows them to anticipate when they will be ready to begin the practicum. Students are encouraged to contact their student success advisor with any questions about their program of study. It is the students’ responsibility to know in what quarter they will begin their practicum courses.

Walden advises students to submit their application via Meditrek® as early as possible. Students may submit an application for practicum at least two quarters prior to the practicum start. Experience has shown that the applications that are completed in haste and submitted near the deadline are most frequently those that are missing items, have errors, or have other problems that can lead to delays or the denial of approval.

If an application is submitted late or after the application deadline, there is no guarantee that staff will be able to review the application in a timely manner prior to the term start. Submitting an application by the application deadline is strongly advised to allow enough time for processing to ensure than an application is reviewed and potentially approved in time. There are many factors that can significantly impact whether or not an application can be approved, including the time it takes for Walden to process and negotiate an Affiliation Agreement, to process and review the application, and for the student to complete the onboarding requirements. The Office of Field Experience staff will work diligently to review and process late applications to the best of our ability, but there are no guarantees. Late applications are processed in the order they are submitted in Meditrek®. If an application is unable to be approved for the requested quarter, it will be closed, and students must resubmit a new application for the next quarter.

There is a point at which late application can no longer be accepted for review, due to the time it takes to process applications. Students need to be sure they are submitting applications by the application deadline.
Exception: Because of some state board requirements and approvals, late applications will not be accepted from students who will perform their clinical practicum experience in Alabama, Alaska, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Tennessee, or Wyoming.

Table 2. Deadlines for Practicum Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If students plan to enroll in a clinical course in this quarter:</th>
<th>Their application is due the FIRST day of this quarter.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Deadlines for Practicum Applications (2019–2020 School Year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Term start Dates</th>
<th>Application Deadline Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2019</td>
<td>May 28, 2019</td>
<td>February 25, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>August 26, 2019</td>
<td>May 28, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2019</td>
<td>November 25, 2019</td>
<td>August 26, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2020</td>
<td>February 24, 2020</td>
<td>November 24, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2020</td>
<td>June 1, 2020</td>
<td>February 24, 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Application Submission

Students need to be sure to submit an application in Meditrek® by the application deadline to ensure enough time for application processing and course registration.

Each practicum course requires a separate application. This is necessary because each practicum course has distinct requirements. Students must also submit a new and separate application each time they wish to change preceptors and/or practicum sites. If a student is using multiple preceptors for one course, separate applications must be submitted for each preceptor. If students are using multiple field sites to complete practicum hours, separate applications must be submitted for each field site.

Meditrek®

The practicum application consists of multiple parts that students must submit via Meditrek®. Students must submit their practicum application via Meditrek® by the application deadline. Application instructions for Meditrek® can be found on the Office of Field Experience website. There are webinars, tutorials, and FAQs on how to guide students on submitting an application in Meditrek®.

Meditrek® is the online clinical rotation management system used to track, monitor, and manage the practicum experience. Students will receive Meditrek® login and password information, directly from Meditrek®, for the entirety of their use with Meditrek®.

- Students will receive one user name and password to utilize Meditrek® for submitting practicum applications and completing practicum logs and practicum evaluations.
- Students should receive login information prior to their first practicum course, approximately 6 months prior to the practicum start. If students have not received their
password 1 month at least before their application is due, they should complete a request form online at https://www.emailmeform.com/builder/emf/Walden/RequestMeditrekCredentials.

- Students can utilize Meditrek® to monitor the status and progress of their applications each term.

**Starting an Application**

1. Students must log in to their Meditrek® account to open a new application.
2. Students must select the application type to start a new application. The application types are as follows:
   - **Primary Application**: The application is the primary application for the preceptor and field site for the quarter and course.
   - **Supplemental Application**: The application is for an additional preceptor and/or field site, which is needed to supplement the primary application for the quarter and course. Supplemental applications are often needed to complete course requirements or to log the required hours.
   - **Replacement Application**: The application is replacing a previously submitted application for a different preceptor and/or field site for the quarter and course. Replacement applications are often needed if a previously nominated preceptor is no longer able to precept or does not meet the requirements.
   - **Remedial Application**: The application will be used to complete course requirements after the term has been completed for the prior term (e.g., for students who received an incomplete grade in the course during the prior term and need to log hours during the next quarter).
3. Students must select the correct course number and correct term when opening a new application. Applications will not be reviewed if the incorrect term is selected. It is the students’ responsibility to ensure they are selecting the correct quarter for the application submission. The term of the application cannot be changed.

**Policy on Electronic Signatures**

Walden manages the clinical application processes in a nearly paperless environment, which permits verifiable electronic signatures, as regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an electronic signature can be the person’s typed name, e-mail address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

**Practicum Requirements**

**License—Student and Preceptor**

Students and preceptors must maintain an active, unencumbered license in the state/country where students plan to complete their practicum experience. License verification will be reviewed as part of the application and preceptor approval process. Practicum applications will not be approved until this review has been completed.
Licensure Review of Students. The Office of Field Experience will conduct a routine professional license verification search and review as part of the practicum application process. This search and review will be completed for all students applying for practicum and all candidates for preceptorship. Information for this review will be gathered through NURSYS®, state boards of nursing, state medical boards, or any other applicable professional credentialing authority. Any information that is attached to a professional license verification will be reviewed by the School of Nursing’s Licensure and Compliance department. The information that will be reviewed includes past and present credentialing information, such as state licensing board orders, consent agreements, letters of reprimand or censure, complaints, malpractice claims, settlements, and awards or other indication of action taken against the license by the professional credentialing authority.

If students have a past or present order, consent agreement, letter of reprimand, censure or complaint, or any other information issued by the professional credentialing authority regarding the students’ professional license, the students will be required to inform their field site and preceptor of this information. The field site and preceptor will need to confirm that the students will be able to complete the field experience at the site prior to the approval of the students’ practicum application. Written documentation from the field site and preceptor, which confirms that (a) the field site is aware of the past or present board issued information (as described previously) and (b) the field site has agreed to accommodate the practicum placement, must be submitted to the Office of Field Experience. After the review of the license information, the Office of Field Experience staff will send instructions to students to request acknowledgment forms from their preceptor(s) and field site administrator(s).

Licensure Review of Preceptors. A routine professional license verification will be obtained by Walden for all preceptor candidates. Any negative information, both past and present, that is part of the license verification will be reviewed by the School of Nursing’s Licensure and Compliance department. Some examples of negative information are disciplinary orders issued by a professional licensing board, malpractice information and letters of complaint, censure, or reprimand. This information will be reviewed as part of the preceptor approval process and could lead to a determination that the preceptor does not meet the university’s requirements. Students will have the opportunity to appeal the decision or to nominate a replacement preceptor who will undergo the same review. Students should be aware that their practicum application will not be approved until an acceptable preceptor is approved.

Many students find it helpful to take a look at their preceptor’s license information prior to submitting their practicum application. If students choose to review this information, it can be found online through NURSYS® or the corresponding state board of nursing website if the preceptor is a nurse, or by reviewing the preceptor’s license information provided by their professional licensing authority (medical board, department of health, etc.). If students have any questions about this process or any possible negative information regarding a potential preceptor, they should contact nurslicensure@mail.waldenu.edu.

Professional Liability Insurance

Students must obtain and maintain professional liability insurance. Students must have their own professional liability policy even if their employer or practicum site has a policy that covers students. A memorandum of certificate of insurance coverage for the active policy will need to
be uploaded to the Meditrek® application and the CastleBranch profile. The professional liability insurance must meet the following requirements:

a. Coverage dates: The insurance plan must cover the entire time of the quarter in which practicum will occur. The dates must cover the duration of the practicum course(s).

b. Memorandum or certificate of insurance coverage must contain your name, address, date of the policy, coverage amounts, coverage type and expiration date.

c. Coverage amounts: Must be a minimum of $1 million per incident and $3 million aggregate.

d. Coverage type: The coverage type must be clearly stated in the memorandum or certificate of insurance coverage. Insurance coverage as an RN will not be accepted. The following coverage type is required:

   i. Students in the MSN nurse practitioner programs: Must be coverage for a nurse practitioner student.

   ii. Students in the MSN specialization programs to include Nurse Executive, Nursing Education, Nursing Informatics, and Public Health Nursing: Must be coverage for a general nursing student.

   iii. Students in the DNP program: Must be coverage for a general nursing student.

Most insurance companies offer student nursing coverage. Walden University does not endorse any specific insurance company, and students are free to shop for a policy that fits the practicum liability insurance requirements. However, from reviewing student applications, the most commonly used insurance providers include Nurses Service Organization (NSO), Healthcare Providers Service Organization (HPSO), Marsh, and Mercer.

The Office of Field Experience staff will work with students to resolve issues with their insurance if students provide early notification with a clear explanation. Students should contact the Office of Field Experience at nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu.

**Onboarding Requirements**

Walden University School of Nursing’s Onboarding Policy requires practicum students to obtain specific verifications such as health screenings and background checks in order to be approved for practicum (“onboarding requirements”). Onboarding requirements are defined as a specific set of prepracticum requirements established by the Walden University School of Nursing based on the most common field site requirements, which will enable students to potentially qualify for a wide range of field sites. These onboarding requirements vary from state to state; however, they generally include the passing of a background check and drug screening, health requirements, required training and professional liability insurance, and any additional onboarding requirements that may be required by the field site. This requirement aligns Walden University with field site expectations and practices that have become standard in the healthcare industry. Because some health systems and field sites mandate onboarding requirements that are not detailed in the Affiliation Agreement, it is beneficial to Walden students to have these requirements in place prior to term start. This policy will require all MSN and DNP students to proactively complete onboarding requirements to avoid practicum delays.

This is a Walden University requirement that applies to all MSN and DNP nursing practicum students. Being an employee of the field site does not exempt students from this requirement.
Requirements, including health screenings and background checks, will only be approved if submitted through Walden University’s designated provider, CastleBranch. The Office of Field Experience staff will confirm submission of all requirements in CastleBranch to approve practicum applications. Please be aware that students are responsible for all expenses incurred for onboarding requirements. **Students WILL NOT be permitted to start their field experience until onboarding requirements are complete.**

Onboarding requirement results will be managed, stored, and tracked by CastleBranch. When required, Walden University will communicate the satisfactory completion of these requirements to field sites.

Students who do not meet these requirements prior to term start will not be permitted to begin their field experience until the onboarding requirements have been completed. In situations such as this, failure to complete the requirements prior to term start may result in students not being able to start field experience until the next term.

If an approved field site requires something in addition to what is required by Walden University, an additional package can be obtained through CastleBranch, at the request of the Office of Field Experience, to fulfill those requirements.

See the Frequently Asked Questions for Onboarding in the FAQ section for more information.

**CastleBranch**

CastleBranch, Walden’s designated vendor for onboarding requirements, provides a secure platform to complete onboarding requirements. Onboarding requirements include, but are not limited to, the following items: background screenings, a drug test, health requirements, trainings, professional liability insurance, and any additional onboarding requirements that may be required by the field site. Students must complete onboarding requirements online at [http://walden.castlebranch.com](http://walden.castlebranch.com). Students must complete **all** the requirements listed in the CastleBranch portal to begin their practicum. The practicum application will not be approved until **all** the requirements are complete.

When ordering the background screening, students will be provided a Disclosure and Authorization Form by CastleBranch, which all students must sign in advance of obtaining the background check. The Disclosure and Authorization Form is required by federal law. Although the Disclosure and Authorization Form references an employment check, for these purposes, it also applies to students applying for field experience.

Students complete onboarding requirements online at [http://walden.castlebranch.com](http://walden.castlebranch.com). Any questions regarding the purchase of a screening package can be answered by CastleBranch at 1-888-723-4263. For questions regarding the field site, onboarding requirements, or practicum application process, please contact nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu.

**Preceptor Commitment Form**

The Preceptor Commitment Form is an agreement with the preceptor to participate in the preceptorship with a Walden University nursing student. The Preceptor Commitment Form is an official form and requires the preceptor to complete the form in its entirety. Students are not to
complete this form on behalf of the preceptor. The form is student, course, and term specific. Thus, a form is required to be completed for each student for each class every quarter.

This Preceptor Commitment Form is different from the Affiliation Agreement. The Office of Field Experience staff at Walden will work directly with the administrator at the field site to establish an Affiliation Agreement, which is a legal agreement directly with the field site and is different from the Preceptor Commitment Form.

The Preceptor Commitment Form is e-mailed directly to the preceptor at the time students enter preceptor information on the Meditrek® application in the “Preceptor and Field Site Information” section. The preceptor should review the form, complete it in its entirety, and sign the form. Students must obtain this form directly from the preceptor to upload it in the Meditrek® application. Preceptor Commitment Forms can also be found online at: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/PreceptorResources.

If the preceptor completes the form electronically, he or she must agree to the Walden University Policy on Electronic Signatures. If the preceptor does not complete the form electronically, he or she must print legibly and provide a signature at the bottom of the form.

After the preceptor completes and signs the form, he or she should send it directly to the student. The student will then upload this form as part of their application in Meditrek®. It is the responsibility of students to upload the Preceptor Commitment Form in Meditrek® and link it to their application.

Upon final approval of the students’ application, the preceptor will receive a confirmation e-mail with a Preceptor Orientation.

More information for preceptors can be found online at https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/PreceptorResources; click on the “Course Information” tab to review course objectives and clinical checklists.

If preceptors have any questions, they may contact the Office of Field Experience at nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu.

**Affiliation Agreement With Practicum Field Sites**

An Affiliation Agreement is a legal contract between Walden University and a practicum field site. The Affiliation Agreement should not be confused with the Preceptor Commitment Form. Accreditation standards and university policy require that an Affiliation Agreement be in place before students start their practicum.

Coming to a mutual agreement about the terms of the Affiliation Agreement can take time, sometimes several weeks or months. In most cases, Walden is able to reach a mutual agreement with students’ practicum sites. There are times, however, when a field site and Walden are not able to enter into an agreement or cannot reach an understanding on the terms of the agreement due to a variety of factors that may be out of either organization’s control. When there is reason to believe that the Affiliation Agreement between Walden and a site will not be completed, Walden will make every effort to notify students in a timely fashion. If there is enough time,
Walden works with students as they try to find a new preceptor and site, even if the Office of Field Experience is continuing to work with the first site. Students are strongly encouraged to arrange for alternative practicum sites as back-up options.

Walden requires that Affiliation Agreements are finalized for every field site where practicum will occur. If students plan to complete practicum hours at multiple sites, an application must be submitted and approved for each and every field site and preceptor. If students plan to complete practicum hours with a contract agency and will be logging hours at multiple sites, an application must be submitted and approved for each physical field site.

In some cases, the Affiliation Agreement with a planned practicum site may not be completed and it may be too late for students to find a new site prior to the start of the current term. If this happens, students are delayed a term while they find a new site. Students are allowed a limited exception to apply for the next term so that they can prepare a new application. Walden is not able to predict or control delays, but they are avoided if possible. It is highly recommended for students to arrange for alternative back-up field sites.

**Field Site Administrator—Affiliation Agreement Contact**

Students must enter the field site administrator contact information in the application in Meditrek®. The contact information for the field site administrator is entered in the “Affiliation Agreement” section of the application in Meditrek®.

It is the responsibility of students to obtain the contact information for the appropriate individual at the field site with authority to sign a legal contact. Preceptors may know whom to contact at practicum sites; otherwise, students should ask if their practicum site has an education or staff-development manager or a risk manager. Authority to sign the Affiliation Agreement could possibly be handled by a dean, chief nursing officer, director, CEO, or other administrator; large organizations may have an on-site legal department and an attorney who signs Affiliation Agreements. The person who signs the agreement must be authorized to do so by the practicum site. The individual authorized to sign the agreement is usually not the preceptor.

*Note:* It is very important to enter the correct contact information in Meditrek® for the contact at the field site because inaccurate information will delay processing of the agreement.

**Process for Affiliation Agreements**

Generally, field experience coordinators will begin reviewing all applications after the application deadline. Field experience coordinators will review applications to determine if there is an active and valid Affiliation Agreement on file with the field site. If there is no Affiliation Agreement with the field site, a field experience coordinator will e-mail the field site administrator with instructions on establishing an Affiliation Agreement with Walden University.

*Note:* If a field site administrator has not received the e-mail about the Affiliation Agreement, the following actions are recommended:

- Confirm the contact information is correct for the field site administrator in the application in Meditrek®. If the contact information is incorrect, please e-mail nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu with the correct contact information and the Affiliation Agreement information will be resent.
• If the contact information is correct, confirm with the field site administrator to check his or her spam or junk e-mail folder for the e-mail.
• If the field site administrator has not received the e-mail, the agreement information can be resent or the administrator may e-mail sonaffiliation@mail.waldenu.edu to resend the Affiliation Agreement information.
• If the field site administrator would like the Affiliation Agreement information to be faxed to them, send an e-mail request to sonaffiliation@mail.waldenu.edu.

Options for Sites to Establish an Affiliation Agreement With Walden

• The field site is willing to sign Walden University’s standard Affiliation Agreement: This agreement is e-mailed directly to the field site administrator. The field site administrator signs the agreement and returns it to the Office of Field Experience.
• The field site would like to use Walden University’s standard Affiliation Agreement with changes: This agreement is e-mailed directly to the field site administrator. The field site administrator should make redline changes to the template agreement and return it to the Office of Field Experience. The contract administrators in the legal department will review the requested changes to either confirm the changes or to communicate with the field site to discuss further terms.
• The field site would like to use their preferred template for an Affiliation Agreement: The field site administrator should e-mail their preferred template to sonaffiliation@mail.waldenu.edu. The contract administrator in the legal department will review the template and communicate directly with the field site administrator to negotiate the terms of the contract.

Affiliation Agreement Status in Meditrek®

Students can monitor the progress of the Affiliation Agreement process on their application checklist in Meditrek®.

• Information Submitted by Student: Application has been submitted by the student. The field site Affiliation Agreement information has not been reviewed by the Office of Field Experience staff.
• Initial Request Sent to Field Site: Walden University does not have an existing valid agreement for this field site. The field experience coordinator has sent an e-mail request to the field site administrator to initiate an agreement. Reminders are e-mailed to the field site administrator every 2 weeks when in this status. E-mails are sent using the contact information of the field site administrator listed by the student on the application.
• Awaiting Response From Field Site: The field experience coordinator has received a communication from the field site organization but has not received an agreement template from the field site and/or is awaiting a follow-up response from the field site organization.
• Submitted to Walden Field Experience: Information has been submitted regarding the field site and is being processed by the field experience staff to move to the next stage.
• In Legal Negotiation Between Walden and Field Site: Walden University’s legal staff are in negotiations with the field site to complete an Affiliation Agreement.
• Completed and Approved: The Affiliation Agreement has been fully executed and approved.
Application Requirements in Meditrek®

Students need to submit their practicum application via Meditrek® by the application deadline (see Tables 2 and 3). The following information and documents are required to submit a complete application in Meditrek®.

Forms to Complete in Meditrek®

- **Student Information** to include the following:
  - Student’s name
  - Gender, DOB, last 4 digits of SSN
  - Address
  - Phone numbers
  - Walden ID number
  - Walden e-mail address

- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) Release**: Students will complete a FERPA release when completing and submitting an application in Meditrek®. The FERPA release authorizes Walden University to release all information, without limitation, regarding enrollment and academic records for the purpose of arranging for, participating in, and being evaluated on the field experience.

- **Preceptor and Field Site Information**: Students will complete information about the preceptor and field site in the application to provide information about the qualifications and appropriateness of the site. It is important for students to include as much information as possible about the preceptor and field site to assist the Office of Field Experience staff to determine if the preceptor and field site will meet the requirements of the practicum course. The required information is as follows:
  - Preceptor contact information to include name, title, phone number, and e-mail address
  - Preceptor credentials
  - Preceptor information to include education degree, licensure, certification, license number, state of license and expiration date
  - Field site location: field site name and address
  - Field site description
  - Preceptor and field site information:
    - Description of the job responsibilities of the preceptor
    - Description of how the preceptor will provide the student with an appropriate practicum experience to meet the learning objectives of the course
    - Description of how the field site will provide the student with an appropriate practicum experience to meet the learning objectives of the course
    - Supporting information or documentation to support the nomination of the preceptor and field site

*Note*: Once this section is complete, the preceptor information can be submitted, and an e-mail will be sent to the preceptor with the Preceptor Commitment Form.

- **Affiliation Agreement Section**: Students need to identify, with the help of the preceptor and/or practicum site contact, who the appropriate individual is at the practicum site that can speak to the Affiliation Agreement. This individual may be the CEO, dean, contracts...
manager, site director, human resources, owner, or president. Large organizations may have an on-site legal department that reviews such agreements and may have an attorney who signs Affiliation Agreements. Students will complete contact information for the field site and the field site administrator that would be responsible for facilitating the Affiliation Agreement. The required information is as follows:
  o Field site name and address
  o Name of administrator authorized to negotiate the Affiliation Agreement
  o Contact information for the field site administrator: **Note:** Students need to ensure correct contact information is entered in Meditrek® as wrong contact information will delay processing.
  o Healthcare organization: If the field site is under a healthcare organization or parent company, the agreement may be under the name of the healthcare organization, so the name of the healthcare system or organization is needed.

**Documents to Upload in Meditrek®**

Students are responsible for uploading all documents in Meditrek® to complete their application. For the most up-to-date information regarding applications and Meditrek®, including webinars, tutorials, and FAQs, refer to the Office of Field Experience website: [https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/home](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/home).

**Note:** See section on “Practicum Requirements” for more details on these requirements.

- **Professional Liability Insurance:** Proof of student’s professional liability insurance:
  o Memorandum of certificate of insurance coverage for the active policy
  o Coverage amounts required are a minimum of $1 million per incident and $3 million per aggregate
  o Coverage dates must cover the duration of the practicum course from the first day of class to the last day of class
  o Coverage type must meet the following requirements:
    ▪ Students in the MSN nurse practitioner programs: Must be coverage for a nurse practitioner student.
    ▪ Students in the MSN specialization programs to include Nurse Executive, Nursing Education, Nursing Informatics, and Public Health Nursing: Must be coverage for a general nursing student.
    ▪ Students in the DNP program: Must be coverage for a general nursing student.
- **Student RN License:**
  o Must have an active, current and unencumbered nursing license; and
  o Must be licensed in the state/country where practicum will occur.
- **Preceptor Commitment Form:**
  o This form is sent directly to the preceptor via e-mail when students submit the preceptor information section in Meditrek®
  o Preceptor must complete the form in its entirety and sign the commitment form
  o Preceptor should submit the form directly to the student for the student to upload in the application in Meditrek®

**Note:** Preceptor Commitment Forms must be completed by the preceptor. Students should not complete the Preceptor Commitment Form on behalf of the preceptor. If it
is found that the student completed the Preceptor Commitment Form on behalf of the preceptor, a case will be reviewed by the academic integrity analyst.

Additional Application Requirements—Onboarding

Students must complete all onboarding requirements through Walden University’s designated provider, CastleBranch, online at http://walden.castlebranch.com.

Students do not need to complete onboarding requirements prior to submitting an application, but the requirements must be completed before an application is approved. Students will have the option to mark their CastleBranch status on their application in Meditrek®. However, the practicum application will not be fully approved until a CastleBranch package is completed. It is highly recommended that students complete requirements in CastleBranch as soon as possible to ensure timely approval of their practicum application.

The Office of Field Experience staff will confirm submission of all requirements in CastleBranch in order to approve practicum applications. The practicum application will not be approved until all the requirements are complete. If a field site requires something in addition to what is required by Walden University, an additional package can be obtained through CastleBranch, at the request of the Office of Field Experience, to fulfill those requirements. The Office of Field Experience staff will e-mail students with further information about additional field site requirements.

Application Review and Approval

Applications must be completed in their entirety and submitted in Meditrek®. Applications in incomplete or incomplete-started status will not be reviewed by the Office of Field Experience staff. It is the students’ responsibility to ensure an application is finalized and submitted in Meditrek®.

Generally, field experience coordinators will begin reviewing applications after the application deadline. Applications are reviewed in the order they are submitted in Meditrek®. Approval of the application must occur prior to the student starting the practicum course and logging hours. Students cannot begin logging practicum hours until their practicum application is fully approved and they have been registered for the course.

Students are able to monitor the progress of their application review by logging in to their Meditrek® account and accessing the application checklist and clicking on the course number. The application checklist will list the review status of each section of the application. When a section of the application is approved, that will be listed next to the section with the date approved.

Application Approval

- The application must be submitted in Meditrek®. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.
- The nursing field experience coordinators will process the students’ practicum applications and notify students if applications are returned or if changes are needed.
• The field experience coordinators will review the students’ application materials. If an application is denied, students will be notified, and, in most cases, they will be given an opportunity to revise their application within a short amount of time.

• If an application is approved, an e-mail will be sent by Meditrek® to the preceptor and to the student.

**Application Steps**

1. When students successfully submit their application, they will receive an automatic e-mail from Meditrek® stating it was submitted and finalized. Applications will not be reviewed until an application is officially submitted in Meditrek®.

2. The application has different sections and each section is worked on simultaneously by different coordinators. Students should monitor their e-mail account for e-mails from the Office of Field Experience staff requesting updates to their application.

3. The Affiliation Agreement and other parts of the application are separate entities and are worked on simultaneously.

4. Students will receive an e-mail with one of the following responses regarding their application:
   - **Returned Status**—*The application has been returned for further work.* The e-mail will identify what students need to correct. Students will need to log back into Meditrek®, select the application, correct the error, and then resubmit. Students will then get another e-mail that the application has been resubmitted.
   - **Pending Status**—*The application is being reviewed by the Office of Field Experience staff.* If further information is needed, an e-mail will be sent requesting additional information.
   - **Registration Restriction.** The application is approvable but student is not able to be registered due to a hold or break in enrollment. Student must resolve hold or be re-enrolled/reinstated before application can be approved.
   - **Preapproved.** The application has been preapproved. Approval must be received by the state board of nursing prior to full approval and registration. Once approval is received from the state board of nursing, the application will be approved and course registration will be processed.
   - **Approved Status. The application has been approved.** Students are approved to complete practicum at the approved field site with the approved preceptor during the approved quarter. The practicum course registration will be processed after the application has been approved.

5. Students should monitor their spam/junk e-mail folder for important e-mails from the Office of Field Experience regarding information about their practicum application.

6. Students can log in to Meditrek® at any time to see the status of their application by clicking on the course on their list of applications. (The application statuses are listed below.)

*Note:* Students are encouraged to monitor their spam/junk e-mail folders regularly.

**Application Status**

Students can monitor the progress of their application review and approval in their checklist in Meditrek®. The statuses are as follows:
• **Closed:** The application is closed due to inability to approve the application. Students are e-mailed with specific details for the closed application.

• **Incomplete—Started:** Students have started the application but haven’t submitted the application in Meditrek®. The application will not be reviewed until it is submitted in Meditrek®.

• **Incomplete:** Students have started the application and submitted the practicum site information but have not submitted the application in Meditrek®. The application will not be reviewed until it is submitted in Meditrek®.

• **Submitted:** The application was submitted to Walden and is ready for review by the Office of Field Experience staff.

• **Returned:** The application was submitted and reviewed by a field experience coordinator and returned to the student for further work due to issues with the application. An e-mail will be sent to the student with further instructions and information. The application will not be further reviewed until the issues are resolved by the student and resubmitted in Meditrek®.

• **Pending:** The application has been submitted and being reviewed by the Office of Field Experience staff. An e-mail will be sent to the student if any additional information is needed or requested.

• **On-Hold:** All aspects of the application have been submitted but is pending approval for the field site Affiliation Agreement and/or onboarding requirements. No further action is needed by the student.

• **Registration Restriction:** Application is approvable but student has either a hold on student account or is not actively enrolled. Student must resolve hold or be re-enrolled/reinstated. Students should contact Student Success Advising for further assistance. Once the hold is removed or the student is re-enrolled, the application will be approved and student will be registered for the practicum course.

• **Preapproved:** Application is preapproved. Everything is approvable, including the Affiliation Agreement. Walden must receive approval from student’s state board of nursing. Once approval is received from the state board of nursing, the application will be approved and student will be registered for the practicum course.

• **Approved:** Everything is approved, including the Affiliation Agreement. Student is approved for practicum and may be registered for the practicum course.

**Preceptor Options**

**Change of Preceptor—Replacement Preceptor**

Because circumstances change, sometimes students need to change preceptors before they begin their practicum experience. If students need to change their preceptor before the practicum course begins, students will need to notify the Office of Field Experience as soon as possible to request a late application in order to open a new application in Meditrek®. This is known as a replacement application. If the new preceptor involves a new practicum site, then a new Affiliation Agreement will also be needed. Depending on the timing before the term begins, there may not be enough time to process an application, Affiliation Agreement, and onboarding; which may delay the practicum experience until a later term.
Supplemental Preceptors

Students may need additional preceptors in order to meet all the requirements for the course including logging all the required hours and/or patients. If students need to precept with multiple preceptors to meet the course requirements, then they have an option to nominate another person as their supplemental preceptor, provided they also nominate a preceptor who fulfills the requirements. When students complete their practicum application, they must provide a fully completed application for both their preceptor and their supplemental preceptor. Applications for supplemental preceptors should be submitted as early as possible. However, applications are accepted during the quarter if students need a supplemental preceptor during the quarter to meet the required practicum hours. If students need a supplemental preceptor, they must complete and submit a separate application for the preceptor and co-preceptor. These applications go through the same review process as other applications.

Example reasons for supplemental preceptors:

- A preceptor may not see enough patients for the student to log the required practicum hours and patients. In this instance, a supplemental preceptor may be submitted by the student to obtain enough hours for the course requirements.
- During the course, the student may not be able to log enough hours with the preceptor to meet the course requirements. In this instance, a supplemental preceptor may be submitted by the student to obtain enough hours for the course requirement.

Field Site Assigns Preceptor After Affiliation Agreement

In some cases, there may be field sites that will not assign a preceptor until after an Affiliation Agreement has been completed. Students must still submit an application in Meditrek® following the process outlined in this section in these situations to abide by the application deadline. In order to submit an application while waiting for the field site to assign a preceptor, students should use placeholder information and documents to fill in areas of their application, which are otherwise incomplete. For instance, students can enter “TBD” into the text field requesting preceptor information. For the Preceptor Commitment Form, students can upload a word document to their application that briefly explains the circumstances and reason for using a placeholder document. Students should ensure that the document is uploaded and linked in the application. After all fields related to the preceptor have been completed with TBD and the placeholder word document is linked, students are able to submit and finalize their application in Meditrek®. By submitting an application, this allows the Office of Field Experience staff to begin working on the Affiliation Agreement. Once the preceptor is assigned, students must edit their application and enter the correct information for the preceptor in the application along with the Preceptor Commitment Form. Students may have to contact nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu to return the application in Meditrek® in order for students to edit their application.

Course Registration and Start

Registration for the practicum courses is subject to review, based on whether students meet course prerequisites and have an approved practicum application on file.

The approval of the application does not guarantee the ability of students to be registered for practicum courses. Registration is subject to availability and based upon when the practicum application is approved. Walden University abides by the rules and regulations required by
various state boards of nursing. Walden is committed to adhering to the academic standards and compliance requirements as determined by various state nursing boards. For this reason, Walden’s School of Nursing is not able to offer an unlimited number of practicum course sections.

Once a student is registered, we are unable to change course sections due to the need to ensure that we have the correct faculty-to-student ratios in sections for accreditation purposes, balancing course loads, optimizations, and cohorting of sections to meet various state boards of nursing faculty licensure requirements.

**It is the responsibility of the student to ensure all holds are removed from their account.** If students have been withdrawn, on a Leave of Absence, or have not been continuously enrolled at Walden, they must contact Student Success Advising to return and be reinstated at Walden. The Office of Field Experience staff will not be able to process a course registration if students have a hold or have not been reinstated.

Students who do not meet the application requirements and deadlines found in this manual will be dropped from the practicum course until all appropriate documents are on file and approved and all course prerequisites are met. If students believe they have met all the requirements for starting the practicum and do not see the course registration on their myWalden page, they should contact the nursing field experience coordinators at nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu.

Students cannot start logging practicum hours until their practicum application is fully approved in Meditrek® and they have been registered for the practicum course.

**Registration Timeline**

Students will be registered upon full approval of their application. The Office of Field Experience staff will process course registrations after the practicum application is approved. Students will not be registered for a practicum course until their practicum application is fully approved in Meditrek®.

**Timeline of Course Registration**

- If the practicum application is approved 4 weeks or more prior to term start, the Office of Field Experience staff will process the registration approximately 4 weeks prior to term start.
- If the practicum application is approved less than 4 weeks prior to term start, the Office of Field Experience staff will process the registration approximately within 2 business days after application is approved.

**Note:** It takes between 24 and 48 hours for students to see their course information in Blackboard.

**Logging Hours After Course Begins**

Students may start logging practicum hours within each course on the second day of the course provided that they have received a practicum approval notice from the field experience coordinators and their clinical instructor approves.
Students may not log any hours before the start of the course. Additionally, students may not log hours prior to (a) receiving practicum application approval from the Office of Field Experience, (b) they are registered for the practicum course, and (c) they receive approval from the clinical instructor. Students are only to log hours with preceptors who have been approved by the Office of Field Experience in Meditrek®. If students log hours with an unapproved preceptor, these hours will not count toward the practicum hour requirement of the course and program.

**Logs in Meditrek®**

Using Meditrek®, students keep a log of the time they spend on practicum activities. Time logs are signed off by preceptors and instructors at the end of the course after the completion of logs. Students are not approved to sign off on time logs on behalf of the preceptor.

**Timeline for Preceptors and Field Sites Programmed in Meditrek®**

- Preceptors and field sites are programmed in Meditrek® for dropdown options in time logs at the end of Week 1 for approved applications.
- If an application is approved after the course starts, the preceptor and field site will be populated weekly on Fridays.
- Preceptors are e-mailed their Meditrek® credentials Monday of Week 3 of the course. Preceptors use their Meditrek® credentials to sign off on time logs and complete evaluations. For preceptors who have not received their Meditrek® credentials, they are encouraged to check their spam/junk e-mail folders or submit a request for credentials to be resent by completing this request form: [https://www.emailmeform.com/builder/emf/Walden/RequestMeditrekCredentials](https://www.emailmeform.com/builder/emf/Walden/RequestMeditrekCredentials).

*Note:* If students are unable to find their preceptor or field site in the dropdown box after Week 1 and their application has been approved more than 1 week, they should e-mail nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu.

**Change of Preceptor After Course Begins**

Because circumstances change, sometimes students need to change preceptors during their practicum experience. If students need to change their preceptor after the practicum course begins, students will need to do the following:

- Notify the assigned faculty member immediately to discuss the impact of completing course requirements and the option of receiving an incomplete grade to gain additional time to log hours with a new preceptor.
- Notify the Office of Field Experience immediately. The Office of Field Experience staff will open a new replacement application for you in Meditrek®. Students must submit a new replacement application for the new preceptor to be approved. If the new preceptor involves a new practicum site, then it is likely the practicum experience will be delayed if an Affiliation Agreement is not on file.

**Office of Field Experience**

Field experience coordinators are Walden employees who help students understand the practicum policies and procedures. They answer questions about the practicum application
process, review materials to ensure that students have completed all required application and
documentation and work collaboratively with the specialization coordinators and the program
director throughout the approval process. Once practicum applications have been approved, the
field experience coordinators ensure that students are enrolled in their appropriate practicum
course.

Field experience coordinators are assigned to students by region. There are six Office of Field
Experience staff members assigned to each region to provide assistance and support to students
through the practicum application process. The staff are assigned by role and each is responsible
to review the various components of practicum applications. The Office of Field Experience staff
are assigned to the following roles by region:

- **Nursing Field Experience Coordinator**: Responsible for ensuring the preceptor and field
  site meet the course requirements. This coordinator approves the preceptor/field site
  section of the application. This coordinator holds student appointments to provide support
  and guidance on preceptor and field site course requirements.

- **Verification Field Experience Coordinator**: Responsible for ensuring students have
  completed the onboarding requirements. This coordinator reviews and approves the
  onboarding section of the application and reviews student accounts in CastleBranch. This
  coordinator holds student appointments to provide support and guidance on onboarding
  requirements.

- **Affiliation Agreement Field Experience Coordinator**: Responsible for facilitating the
  Affiliation Agreement process with nominated field sites. This coordinator holds student
  appointments to provide updates and information on Affiliation Agreements. Please note
  that the actual contract negotiation is completed by a contract administrator as part of the
  legal department in the Office of Applied Learning Contracts at Walden.

- **Assistant Field Experience Coordinators**: Multiple coordinators are responsible for
  reviewing applications to include license reviews, preceptor forms, and professional
  liability insurance documents, and they complete a degree audit to verify course
  prerequisites have been met. These staff members also process registrations for practicum
  courses.

- **Support Field Experience Coordinator**: Responsible for providing support for Meditrek®
  to include credentials, submitting applications, uploading documents, time logs, patient
  logs, and evaluations.

- **Field Experience Coordinator**: Responsible for assisting students with the application
  process in general along with providing students support and guidance on searching for
  preceptors. This coordinator meets with students to provide support in searching for
  preceptors and field sites along with general questions about practicum.

Here are the different ways in which students can contact the Office of Field Experience staff:

- **E-mail**: nursinglevel@mail.waldenu.edu. E-mail is often the most efficient way to
  receive a prompt response. The response time averages between 1 and 2 business days.

- **Live Chat**: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus. Live Chat
  is a great way to communicate with fully trained team members in real time. Live Chat is
  the best way to reach the Office of Field Experience staff when they are experiencing
  high call volume.

- **Phone**: 855-593-9632. Periods of high call volume are often experienced during term
  start times so sending an e-mail, using Live Chat, or scheduling an appointment are great
  options to get in touch with Office of Field Experience staff.
- Appointments: [https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus). Students can arrange for a phone appointment online to schedule a time to speak with one of the team members in the students’ region by role.
- Quick Answers: [https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/home](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/home). Search the online database for answers to questions and get a quick answer online.

Office of Field Experience staff are available to students via e-mail, phone, or appointment. Students can find their regional field experience coordinator online at [https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus).
SECTION 7. PRACTICUM POLICIES

This manual contains only select policy information. All Walden students agree to abide by all university policies and procedures as a condition of acceptance and continued enrollment. Students should consult the student handbook for complete information about university policies and procedures.

Student Conduct and Responsibilities

Refer to Section 3 of the student handbook, “Student Conduct and Responsibilities” (https://catalog.waldenu.edu/content.php?catoid=165&navoid=56689), for detailed policy information including the Code of Conduct.

Professional Competence

Refer to Section 3 of the student handbook for the Student Professional Competence Policy, https://catalog.waldenu.edu/content.php?catoid=165&navoid=56736, reflecting academic standing, problem behaviors, inappropriate and/or unprofessional conduct, and critical behaviors.

Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment Policies


All practice experience sites are required to provide a copy of their nondiscrimination and nonharassment policies. If no such written policy exists, then the Walden policies must be adopted by the site.

Walden University School of Nursing Onboarding Requirement Policy

All MSN and DNP students in the School of Nursing participating in practicum courses commencing on and after November 27, 2017, will be required to complete specific onboarding requirements in order to be approved to complete field experience. Some of these onboarding requirements* must be obtained or completed through Walden’s designated provider, CastleBranch. Information about CastleBranch can be found at https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/applicationprocess.

Students who do not meet this requirement prior to term start will not be permitted to begin their field experience until the onboarding requirements have been met. In situations such as this, failure to meet the requirements prior to term start may result in students not being able to start field experience until the next term.
Details of the practicum application process can be found in the program practicum manual located at [https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/formsanddocuments](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/formsanddocuments). Requirements completed through CastleBranch must be started prior to submitting a practicum application and completed prior to term start.

*Onboarding requirements defined:* A specific set of prepracticum requirements established by Walden School of Nursing based on the most common field site requirements, which will enable students to potentially qualify for a wide range of field sites. These onboarding requirements vary from state to state; however, they generally include a background check, drug screening, health requirements, required training, and professional liability insurance as well as additional onboarding requirements that may be required by the field site. If an approved field site requires something in addition to what is required by Walden University, an additional package can be obtained through CastleBranch, at the request of the Office of Field Experience, to fulfill those requirements.

**Walden University School of Nursing Technical Standards Policy**

**Technical Standards Necessary to the Successful Completion of School of Nursing Programs**

Walden University’s School of Nursing programs are designed to educate nurses for today’s professional environment by developing the skills of reflection, independent learning, and enhanced critical thinking. These will enable students to graduate from Walden’s programs and better equip graduates to advance their careers, develop leadership skills, and stay current in their field throughout their career.

Students enrolled in Walden’s School of Nursing programs must establish professional relationships both within and outside of the university setting and may be required to work actively and physically both in the classroom and with other practitioners and patients in a professional setting during field experiences. Therefore, the following list of technical standards is provided to clearly establish the level of capability required to successfully complete School of Nursing programs of study and to encourage current and prospective students to self-assess their qualifications for the program.

The School of Nursing encourages any student who may not be able to meet these standards due to a disability to contact the Office of Disability Services to discuss reasonable accommodations. A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to an instructional activity, equipment, facility, program or service that enables a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to fulfill the requirements necessary for graduation from the nursing program.

A student in the School of Nursing must meet technical standard requirements in the following areas (examples are not all-inclusive):

1. Motor and Mobility Function
2. Behavioral/Emotional Function
3. Critical-Thinking and Cognition Skills
4. Interpersonal and Professional Skills
5. Communication Skills
Students are advised that their success in their chosen program may be dependent on an ability to meet these technical standards.

1. **Motor and Mobility Function**
   Students must be able to perform the following functions:
   - Ability to observe patient condition and responses to health and illness;
   - Coordinate both gross and fine motor muscular movements, maintain equilibrium, and functionally use the senses of touch and vision;
   - Maintain stamina and physical ability required to participate in classes and activities that are part of the curriculum;
   - Execute movements sufficient to communicate effectively in a written format;
   - Obtain and interpret data from assessment techniques such as observation, palpation of anatomical structures, percussion, noting surface characteristics, assessment of tone, temperature, depth, and other diagnostic procedures; and
   - Travel to clinical education sites.

2. **Behavioral/Emotional Function**
   Students must be able to perform the following functions:
   - Maintain mental acuity and professional demeanor in stressful environments or during impending deadlines; and
   - Maintain mental acuity and professional demeanor sufficient to complete timed written and/or oral examinations and laboratory practical assessments within established time limits, especially when speed of performance or speed of decision making is a critical component.

3. **Critical-Thinking and Cognition Skills**
   Students must be able to perform the following functions:
   - Analyze and synthesize data from a variety of sources;
   - Put research findings into practice;
   - Exhibit a positive, interactive response to feedback;
   - Use sound judgment and apply safety precautions as appropriate; and
   - Demonstrate higher-level cognitive abilities, which include
     - Rational thought,
     - Measurement,
     - Calculation,
     - Conceptualization,
     - Analysis,
     - Synthesis,
     - Organization,
     - Memory,
     - Application,
     - Clinical reasoning,
     - Ethical reasoning, and
     - Sound judgment.
4. Interpersonal and Professional Skills
Students must be able to perform the following functions:

- Interact appropriately with individuals and groups from a variety of social, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds;
- Actively participate and contribute to group projects;
- Consistently display integrity, honesty, empathy, caring, fairness, respect for self and others, diligence, and dedication;
- Promptly complete all assignments and responsibilities;
- Develop mature, sensitive, and effective relationships, not only with patients but with all members of the university community and other healthcare teams;
- Tolerate emotionally and mentally demanding workloads;
- Identify potentially violent or abusive situations with patients in order to safely withdraw from the interaction;
- Function effectively under stress, and proactively make use of available resources to help maintain both physical and mental health;
- Adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, and be able to learn in the face of uncertainty; and
- Take responsibility for themselves and their behaviors.

5. Communication Skills
Students must be able to perform the following functions:

- Communicate effectively in verbal and written form in any applicable setting including communications with university faculty and staff, other students, and other healthcare professionals;
- Elicit, convey, and clarify information in a timely manner;
- Complete written work at a professional level in a timely manner;
- Document patient/client assessment/evaluation, intervention plans, and progress notations succinctly and in a timeframe similar to clinical constraints;
- Achieve basic technical competency required to function in the classroom and professional setting, including functionality in word processing, e-mail, and use of the Internet; and
- Effectively describe perceived changes and perceive nonverbal communication.

Walden University is committed to providing equal access to qualified students with disabilities. A qualified student is a student with a disability who, with or without reasonable accommodations, meets the technical standards requirements for participation in School of Nursing programs and activities. School of Nursing applicants and students who need reasonable accommodations* to meet these requirements due to functional limitations caused by a disability should contact disability@mail.waldenu.edu at the earliest opportunity to discuss available options. Students requesting disability accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services prior to the start of their program, or as soon as possible if their personal situation changes and they are in need of disability accommodations.

*If students require an accommodation to complete any of the technical standards, it's their responsibility to contact the Disability Services Office (disability@mail.waldenu.edu, 612-312-1205 or 1-800-925-3368 x312-1205) to determine if reasonable accommodations can be made. There may be certain physical requirements and standards of performance that the School of Nursing programs cannot accommodate.
Problem Resolution Process

During their practicum, students may be vulnerable to any number of difficulties that can pose barriers to a successful learning experience. By the time students reach the end of the program, they are entering the work setting and should demonstrate effective problem-solving skills in many difficult situations. However, students are not expected to resolve practicum problems alone.

With Practicum Site Personnel

If a problem develops between students and their practicum preceptor (or other site personnel), they should consult the appropriate individual at Walden to help determine the appropriate strategy to resolve the problem in an informal manner: first, students should consult the practicum course faculty member, and then, if needed, they may consult the specialization coordinator.

Significant problems that arise in the practicum setting should be addressed using the process available to employees at the site and as officially documented in the site Affiliation Agreement signed for the practicum experience. The appropriate Walden faculty or staff member will assist students in preparing any necessary documentation and will closely monitor the progress of the problem resolution, including any grievance process.

The specialization coordinator and/or program director should inform the School of Nursing’s dean about any unresolved issues and must formally document the efforts to resolve the issues presented. The dean will review the efforts to resolve the problem and inform students of other possible recourse options.

With Walden Faculty or Staff Members

Consistent with ethical guidelines, in nearly all situations, students should initially address any concerns directly with the faculty or staff member involved (e.g., practicum course faculty member, specialization coordinator) and attempt to resolve the issue at an informal level, before proceeding to a request for intervention (e.g., from the program director or dean). Failure to address the problem at the program level may delay resolution, as the problem will likely be referred back to the program level.

There shall be no retaliation against any student who identifies a problem or seeks assistance in resolving a conflict involving a member of Walden’s faculty or staff, including those students who choose to file a formal grievance.

Step 1. Consult the Program Director

If a problem develops between students and their practicum course faculty member (or other faculty or staff member), the program director will help students determine the appropriate strategy to resolve the problem in an informal manner. The faculty or staff member and/or the program director should fully inform the associate dean about any unresolved issues and document all attempts to resolve the issues students have presented. All parties should receive copies of any documentation after it is submitted to and approved by the appropriate dean.
Step 2. Consult the Dean
If students are not able to resolve the problem with the support and intervention of the program director, they should approach the dean to seek guidance and/or intervention. The dean should already have copies of all the documentation of the problem and resolution efforts. The dean will initiate further investigation of the concern. Students may be offered counseling or other needed supports at the dean’s discretion.

Step 3. Consider Filing a Grievance
If the dean is unable to facilitate resolution of the problem, students may consider filing a grievance following Walden University’s grievance procedure, as described below.

Note: Filing a grievance may initiate reassignment of one or more of the involved parties for a reasonable period to allow for an appropriate investigation of the situation. The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the accused, will be respected to the extent possible insofar as it does not interfere with the institution’s legal obligation or ability to investigate allegations of misconduct brought to the university’s attention or to take corrective action when it is found that misconduct has occurred.

A formal grievance must be identified as such in writing and directed to the chief academic officer, using the electronic Student Academic Appeals Form. The grievance normally should originate no more than 30 calendar days following a resolution decision by the dean or designee (refer to Step 2) concerning the complaint or conduct that gave rise to the grievance. The chief academic officer initially reviews the case to determine appropriate action, which can include referring the matter to an appropriate university office for review. If the conflict is resolved at this stage, no further action is necessary.

Step 4. Hearing Committee
If the conflict cannot be resolved at the initial review stage, the chief academic officer appoints a hearing committee to review the allegations. A written decision from the committee will be delivered in as timely a manner as possible, while allowing for appropriate investigation and consideration, not to exceed 60 calendar days from the date the complaint is filed with the chief academic officer, unless the committee notifies the parties of the need for an extension to properly complete the process. The written records are confidential but available for on-site review by the person(s) directly involved.

In all cases, the decision of the chief academic officer is final and not subject to appeal.
SECTION 8. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long is my practicum?
As a DNP student, you will spend a total of 44 weeks engaged in practicum-related activities, including 11 weeks each in the courses NURS 8410, 8400, 8500, and 8510.

Can I take two practicum courses concurrently?
No. The four-course series is hierarchical in nature, with each building on the concepts and products of the previous course. The series of courses is designed to be taken sequentially.

Do I have to finish all the practicum hours during the practicum course?
Yes. The clinical hours for each practicum course must be completed to satisfactorily meet the objectives of the course before advancing to the next practicum course. You must complete 576 hours in the four-course practicum sequence. All practicum hours must be logged within the quarter enrolled as hours should not be logged prior to or in between quarters or banked from one practicum course to another.

Additional hours to complete the 1,000-hour graduation requirement may either be transferred in from an appropriate educational experience (usually an MSN degree) or met through enrollment in NURS 8600. Practicum hours logged for NURS 8600 should not be counted for hours in other required practicum courses.

Will I need to obtain books or materials for the practicum experience that are not included in NURS 8410, 8400, 8500, and 8510?
It may be necessary for you to purchase specific books that relate to your chosen area of interest, as not all important work in that area will be published in peer-reviewed journals and, therefore, available in the Walden online library. This is a common requirement of scholar-practitioners who seek to keep current in their areas of expertise.

When are my deadlines for the practicum application parts?
Your DNP practicum application deadline is the first day of the quarter before the quarter students wish to begin their practicum. This deadline is firm. Application elements that are received after the deadline will be delayed in processing until the next quarter, and the practicum start will be delayed.

How early can I submit my practicum application?
You may submit their DNP practicum application one to two quarters before the deadline. The deadline is the first day of the quarter before the quarter students wish to begin the practicum.

If the site provides liability insurance coverage for me, do I still need to have their own coverage?
Yes. All Walden students beginning a practicum are required to purchase professional liability insurance, even if there is no patient or client contact.
Who at my practicum site should I designate in Meditrek® as the practicum site Affiliation Agreement contact?
The Affiliation Agreement must be signed by a site administrator who has the authority to sign legal agreements. Often, that is the contracts manager, CEO, CNO, director, human resources staff member, owner, or president. Large organizations may have an on-site legal department that reviews such agreements.

When can I begin my practicum?
You may begin your practicum experiential learning activities once you have successfully completed all prerequisite coursework, submitted your practicum application documents, received notification of approval of your practicum application, and been enrolled in the practicum course. You must be in good academic standing to begin the practicum experience. If you are unsure of your academic standing, please contact the Student Success Advising Team at studentsuccess@mail.waldenu.edu.

If my practicum site wants me to begin practicum activities before I start the practicum course, am I allowed to start early?
No. You must wait until the first week of the practicum course to begin the practicum activities. Any hours accumulated prior to the first week of the practicum course will not be accepted.

Can my practicum experience be virtual?
Typically, the practicum is completed at a physical site. Any exceptions will have to be approved by the DNP program director.

Can I be paid for my practicum hours?
No. You cannot engage in a paid practicum experience under any circumstances. Practicum experiences undertaken at your place of employment cannot be scheduled during your working hours.

Can my practicum experience be in a private care or private home setting?
No. Practicum applications requesting a site that is a private care setting or private home will not be approved.

How can I obtain professional liability insurance?
Walden does not endorse a particular insurance provider. Students usually obtain professional liability insurance coverage through companies such as Nurses Service Organization (NSO), Healthcare Providers Service Organization (HPSO), Marsh, and Mercer.

Will my preceptor be compensated?
Although Walden University School of Nursing does not compensate preceptors financially for preceptorships, they are provided with the following benefits:
- Verification document of hours precepted to utilize for continuing education and licensure renewal requirements
- Access to free continuing education opportunities provided by Walden’s School of Nursing Continuing Education program for nurses
Onboarding Frequently Asked Questions

Why are onboarding requirements being required?
All healthcare facilities accredited by The Joint Commission (https://www.jointcommission.org/) are required to obtain a background check on all employees, volunteers, and students who enter their facilities. Walden University is now requiring onboarding requirements to be completed in CastleBranch for students engaging in practicum experiences to ensure all students starting practicum courses have completed all requirements.

My field site does not require me to complete a background check, drug test or immunizations. Do I still need to complete CastleBranch?
Yes, this is a requirement of Walden University for students to complete prior to beginning practicum. Regardless of what your field site may require, completion of a CastleBranch package is a Walden University requirement.

Do I need to complete onboarding requirements in CastleBranch if I am an employee of the field site?
Yes, this is a Walden University requirement that applies to all School of Nursing practicum students. Being an employee of your field site does not exempt students from this requirement. Please note that, for purposes of completing practicum, the onboarding requirements set forth by Walden University and agreed to by Walden University and the field site must be completed prior to the student beginning the practicum even if similar requirements had been completed as part of the student’s employment.

Do I need to obtain a new package each quarter for each practicum course?
No; however, you will need to obtain an updated background check and drug screen annually in CastleBranch if your practicum experiences encompass more than one calendar year. Some field sites may require a more recent background check and drug screen, so you may be requested to update those screens in CastleBranch depending on the specific field site requirement. The Office of Field Experience will contact you for field site-specific requirements.

What if a background check or drug screen was performed by my employer?
All background checks and drug screens must be completed through CastleBranch for validation and verification for Walden University. We are unable to accept background checks or drug screens from another source other than through CastleBranch.

What is CastleBranch?
CastleBranch is Walden’s designated vendor for onboarding requirements. CastleBranch is a service that allows students to complete onboarding requirements and the Office of Field Experience staff to verify completion of requirements. CastleBranch provides a secure and confidential platform. CastleBranch provides a service for us to track, verify, monitor, manage, and store all documentation required for practicum placement for auditing purposes.

What are onboarding requirements?
Onboarding is a set of practicum requirements established by Walden School of Nursing based on the most common field site requirements, which will enable students to potentially qualify for a wide range of field sites. These onboarding requirements vary from state to state; however, they generally include a background check, drug screening, health requirements, required training, professional liability insurance, and any additional onboarding requirements that may
be required by the field site. If an approved field site requires something in addition to what is required by Walden University, an additional package can be obtained through CastleBranch, at the request of the Office of Field Experience, to fulfill those requirements.

**How do I sign up for a package with CastleBranch?**
Go to the Walden portal for CastleBranch at walden.castlebranch.com. The site will walk you through the steps of signing up for a package. There is no package code required.

**What is Walden’s package code for CastleBranch?**
Walden University students do not need a package code. Students need to register for a profile by going directly to the Walden portal for CastleBranch at walden.castlebranch.com. The site will walk you through the steps of signing up for a package. There is no package code required.

**Can I just send all my documents directly to Walden University?**
No, Walden University cannot directly accept any personal health documentation, background checks or drug test reports. All documents received directly by Walden University will be immediately and confidentially destroyed.

**How are the results of my background check shared with my practicum field site?**
The results of your background check are only shared with the field sites to which you have authorized access through your practicum application. Once you have authorized a field site, through submission of a practicum application with a FERPA release in Meditrek®, Walden University will be able to provide verification and attestation to the field site directly.

**How do I share my results and documents in CastleBranch to a field site?**
Students can share their results and documentation in CastleBranch to representatives at their field site. Students can call CastleBranch directly to ask how to share the results with their field site.

**What happens when my requirements expire in CastleBranch?**
It is the student’s responsibility to ensure all requirements are up to date in CastleBranch. Students can update requirements in CastleBranch when they expire. CastleBranch will send e-mail notifications when requirements are due to expire. Students must upload updated documentation in CastleBranch to keep requirements in compliance.

**How long will it take to complete the background check once I provide the necessary information to CastleBranch?**
Turnaround time for background checks varies by state, but according to CastleBranch 95% of background check results are completed within 3–5 business days. Information specific to your state can be obtained by contacting CastleBranch customer service. Students can request an expedited review through CastleBranch by paying an extra service fee. Please contact CastleBranch for more information.
SECTION 9. CONTACT INFORMATION

School of Nursing

Office of Field Experience
Website: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son
E-mail: nursingfield@mail.waldenu.edu
Contact Us Website: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus
Phone Appointments: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus
Phone: 1-855-593-9632
Live Chat: Live Chat with Office of Field Experience through your student portal.

DNP Program Director
Nancy E. Moss, FNP, CNM, PhD: nancy.moss@mail.waldenu.edu

Program Coordinator
Cheryl McGinnis: cheryl.mcginnis@mail.waldenu.edu

Vice Provost, College of Health Sciences and Dean, School of Nursing
Andrea Lindell, PhD, RN, ANEF: andrea.lindell@mail.waldenu.edu

Students should begin their inquiry at the level at which their question is most likely to be answered. Delays in obtaining information may result if students inquire first from an administrator and then must be referred to a more appropriate resource person.

Note: Students should be familiar with the information in this manual, the School of Nursing Handbook, and the Office of Field Experience website before contacting a School of Nursing faculty member or staff member for help.

Other Important Resources

Field Experience Resource Links
Quick Answers: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/home#s-lg-box-4293425

Meditrek® Webinars:
https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/formsanddocuments

Tutorials: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/formsanddocuments

How to submit your Application: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sk9OCfNEcg&feature=youtu.be
Schedule an Appointment With Field Experience Coordinators From Your Region:  
https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus

**Student Success Advising Team**

Student success advisors are available at 1-800-WALDENU (1-800-925-3368), option 3, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central time. Students can also e-mail advisors for the DNP program: studentsuccess@mail.waldenu.edu.

**Office of Disability Services**

The director of disability services can be reached by phone at 1-612-312-1205 or e-mail at disability@mail.waldenu.edu. For more information, visit the Office of Disability Services.

**Writing Center**

Walden’s Writing Center staff members are available to answer questions about doctoral writing or APA Style. Students can contact the center’s tutors (writingsupport@mail.waldenu.edu) while enrolled in courses up to and including in the prospectus, proposal, and project courses. Tutor or editor reviews may be scheduled using the Walden scheduling system.

The online Writing Center also contains links to a host of resources crucial to scholarly work, including courses, guides, and reviews. Writing is a key element of scholarly practice and of the DNP role, and these resources have proven extremely useful for DNP students. One link in particular is indispensable for all DNP projects: The DNP Project Template provides an APA format template to help students write their DNP project proposals and final project papers.

Visit the Writing Center website for more information on these resources and to view the full range of services offered.

**Research Center**

The Center for Research Quality’s website contains links to many valuable resources that will aid and support scholarly work throughout the DNP program. DNP forms can be found at https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/osra/dnp.

- **DNP Program Forms**—This page contains links to the following (and other) documents, all of which are important to understanding and navigating the proposal and final project paper development and evaluation process:
  - DNP Project Process Guide
  - DNP Project Checklist
- **Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB)**—This page contains links to IRB-specific resources and instructions for the submission of an IRB application following approval by the DNP Project committee. (Also see the DNP Project Process Guide for DNP-specific information about the process for gaining IRB approval for a DNP project.)
- The Doctoral Research Submission Tool (MyDR) is a tool that allows students to submit all necessary DNP project documents into a centralized online location for faculty review and feedback.
General or procedural type questions related to the DNP Project: dnp@mail.waldenu.edu.

MyDR technical questions: support@mail.waldenu.edu.
SECTION 10. PROGRAM OF STUDY

DNP Curriculum Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credit Hour(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8000** - Foundations and Essentials of Doctoral Study in Nursing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8110** – Theoretical and Scientific Foundations for Nursing (DNP committee chair assigned)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8200** – Methods for Evidence-Based Practice</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8210** - Transforming Nursing and Healthcare Through Technology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8300** - Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Improvement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8410* - Best Practices in Nursing Specialties (4 cr. didactic, 1 cr. of 72 DNP clinical hours)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8310** - Epidemiology and Population Health</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8400* – Evidence-Based Practice I: Assessment and Design (4 cr. didactic, 1 cr. of 72 DNP clinical hours)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8100** - Healthcare Policy and Advocacy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8500* – Evidence-Based Practice II: Planning and Implementation (216 DNP clinical hours)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8510* – Evidence-Based Practice III: Implementation, Evaluation, and Dissemination (216 DNP clinical hours)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8600* - DNP Field Experience (1quarter cr. hour =72 clinical hours). Students take the DNP Field Experience up to six times based on clinical hours attained prior to DNP admission.</td>
<td>0–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 8700 - DNP Project Mentoring (starting after NURS 8110 and each term through completion of NURS 8510)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>51–57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Practicum courses, practicum application, and approval required for each course.
**DNP Core Courses

DNP Course Descriptions

**NURS 8000** - Students in this course are introduced to Walden University and are provided with a foundation for professional development in doctoral nursing practice. Students learn professional standards and end-of-program expectations, and they explore the role of the scholar-practitioner as one who effects positive social change. They engage in course assignments focused on the practical application of professional writing, critical-thinking skills, and the requirements for successful participation in an online curriculum. Students also explore the
essentials of being a Walden doctoral student, relevant professional and specialty standards of doctoral-level nursing, intra- and interprofessional collaboration, and the process of the DNP scholarly project.

**NURS 8100** - Many economic, financial, and political factors influence the delivery of healthcare, making healthcare reform a challenging task. In this course, students examine these factors and challenges, and they consider policy reform through legal, regulatory, ethical, societal, and organizational contexts. They examine the political and policy process, including agenda setting, stakeholder analysis, and application of policy analysis frameworks. Students also explore the importance of interprofessional collaboration in improving health outcomes through the policy process and advocacy for development and implementation of nursing and healthcare policies in organizations at the local, state, national, and international levels. Students engage in written analyses through which they develop new policies and critically evaluate existing policies though policy analysis frameworks.

**NURS 8110** - In this course, students focus on the integration of scientific, philosophical, and theoretical concepts as the basis for the highest level of nursing practice. They examine the scientific underpinnings for nursing practice, including biobehavioral, pathophysiological, psychosocial, and environmental sciences, and they explore the interrelationship among knowledge, research, and practice. Students also explore and discuss clinical inquiry, ethical issues, and models of evidence-based practice. Considering various philosophies, students describe their own philosophy of nursing. They also apply course concepts to a variety of practical assignments, including a literature review, concept map, and evaluation of current clinical practice problems, among others.

**NURS 8200** - Students in this course focus on the integration of scientific, philosophical, and theoretical concepts as the basis for the highest level of nursing practice. The scientific underpinnings for nursing practice including biobehavioral, pathophysiological, psychosocial, and environmental sciences are examined. The interrelationship among knowledge, research, and practice is explored. Clinical inquiry, ethical issues, and models of evidence-based practice are presented.

**NURS 8210** - When used effectively, information technology can support generation of new knowledge and emerging information technologies. In this course, students examine the critical appraisal and use of information technology in advanced nursing practice. Students work toward gaining the skills and knowledge to process and manage information systems/technology resources in consumer, clinical, and public health settings. Students engage in a variety of discussions and assignments designed to provide practical application of content on topics including retrieval and critical analysis of digital data to support healthcare quality improvement; electronic health records integration and evaluation; and Web-based learning and intervention tools to support and improve patient care. They also explore ethical, regulatory, and legal issues as well as the healthcare standards and principles for selecting and evaluating information systems and patient care technology.

**NURS 8300** - The focus of this course is on the development of leadership strategies and competencies to support healthcare and organizational quality delivery of care. Emphasis is placed on a systems approach exploring the organizational structures, which impact healthcare quality performance and, ultimately, patient outcomes. Using macro (enterprise-wide) and micro
(individual and team performance) perspectives, students examine the leadership roles, which define, develop, and support decisions effecting quality strategies. In this course, students address how key organizational theories, principles, and concepts relate to achieving the effective and efficient delivery of safe healthcare services. Through the development of a quality program initiative, students demonstrate an understanding of the impact an initiative has on organizational structure, its environment, and the system's leadership.

**NURS 8310** - Students in this course are provided with an overview of epidemiologic methodology in the study of the distribution and etiology of disease and health-related conditions in human populations. Students examine important study designs and discuss the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each. They explore and discuss select global problems, such as infectious diseases, bioterrorism attacks, and effects of disasters and emergencies, and they apply epidemiologic and biostatistical methods to study factors related to aggregate, population, and individual health. Additionally, students work toward gaining cultural sensitivity and an interprofessional approach to caring for diverse populations at risk to ensure access to care.

**NURS 8400** - In this course, students focus on the competencies required of the healthcare professional in planning for the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of health promotion and disease prevention initiatives. They explore and discuss strategic approaches to planning, implementation, and evaluation, including cost-benefit analysis. Note: This is a 5-cr. course (4 didactic cr., 1 clinical cr.). Clinical hours have a 1:6 ratio (credit/clinical), resulting in 72 clinical hours.

**NURS 8410** - A scholarly inquiry of key concepts in nursing is presented in this course. Students analyze best practices and evolving issues in their nursing areas of practice. They explore advanced specialty practice problems through a guided initial review of literature. Students develop a program or project to address clinical/practice questions under the guidance of an approved clinical mentor. Students generate an evidence-based practice question, develop and implement an intervention within the practicum setting. Students disseminate the project plan and results at the practicum site. Note: This is a 5-cr. course (4 didactic cr., 1 clinical cr.). Clinical hours have a 1:6 ratio (credit/clinical), resulting in 72 clinical hours.

**NURS 8500** - In this DNP practicum course, students focus on planning and implementing a program/project design to address their clinical/practice questions; students complete work under the guidance of an approved clinical mentor. Generating a practicum portfolio that drills down to the evidence regarding their clinical/practice question and resulting findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Note: This 3-cr. practicum course has a 1:6 ratio of credit to clinical hours, resulting in 216 clinical hours.

**NURS 8510** - This DNP practicum course focuses on the evaluation of an evidence-based health project relevant to aggregate, systems, or organizational levels of health care. In addition, the student develops and plans for the dissemination of a scholarly product generated by that project to a wider community of scholar-practitioners. Students work with an approved practicum mentor to generate practicum evidence and complete practicum journal requirements, and the evidence-based project demonstrating the use of leadership skills and advanced nursing practice knowledge to promote quality improvement, improve health outcomes, and inform health care policy. The DNP practicum course provides students the opportunity to reflect on self-
evaluation, professional growth and post-graduation plans. Note: This 3-credit practicum course has a 1:6 ratio of credit to practicum hours, resulting in 216 practicum hours.

**NURS 8600** - The purpose of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to complete additional practicum hours to fulfill the 1,000-hour requirement of the DNP. Students may take the DNP Field Experience course up to six times, based on practicum hours attained prior to DNP admission. Students generate practicum portfolio evidence. This 1-cr. practicum course has a 1:6 ratio of credit to practicum hours, resulting in 72 practicum hours.

**NURS 8700** - The purpose of this course is to serve as a platform for ongoing communication between students and their DNP Project Committee chairs and a repository for drafts and documentation related to the DNP project. Students will be assigned to sections of NURS 8700 based on their DNP Project Committee chair, which will support communication between students who are working on their DNP projects with common faculty chairs in an ongoing collaborative learning community.

**NURS 8701** - The purpose of this course is to serve as a platform for ongoing communication between students and their DNP Project Committee chairs and a repository for drafts and documentation related to the DNP project. Students will be assigned to sections of NURS 8701 based on their DNP Project Committee chair, which will support communication between students who are working on their DNP projects with common faculty chairs in an ongoing collaborative learning community.

Additional information can be found within the *Walden University Catalog* at [https://catalog.waldenu.edu/](https://catalog.waldenu.edu/).
REFERENCES