

DNP Project to Manuscript

Converting a DNP Scholarly Project into a Manuscript

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The utilization of nursing knowledge for the purposes of improving practice continues to be challenging for the discipline. Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) Capstone projects are often valuable sources of information and can be advantageous to others in specific areas of the discipline (Resnick, 2013). Therefore, students engaged in DNP projects should be encouraged to disseminate and publish information about their study and subsequent findings. The promotion of publishing DNP capstone projects can offer a means of managing issues associated with inadequate diffusion of research-based evidence (Whitley et al., 1998) and should be a goal of graduate education.

Research dissemination has become extremely important in nursing's era of evidence-based practice. DNP capstone projects have the potential to offer new findings or validate best practices and nursing interventions. Sharing this information with nurses that can use it in practice may help address the research/practice gap. Information that can be shared in the form of articles can provide evidence for nurses to use and offer a road map for study replication resulting in an extension of what is known about best practices and nursing interventions and their impact on patient outcomes (Oermann, 2008).

Capstone projects should represent and illustrate the result of knowledge and skills gained throughout DNP courses and activities. A DNP capstone project should also apply knowledge as interventions based on evidence are disseminated into a clinical environment. Capstone projects may be in the form of program evaluation, pilot study research, a systematic review, health care policy analysis, or outcomes research. Nevertheless, the manuscript describing the capstone project must be presented in written form in a scholarly manner if they are to be submitted as a manuscript for review by editors and reviewers from a scientific point of view (Resnick, 2013).

REALISTICALLY ASSESS YOUR PROJECT FOR PUBLISHING POTENTIAL

Evidence in the form of manuscripts resulting from DNP capstone projects may find homes in clinical journals, which are typically written and published for nurses working in clinical settings. These journals are often easier to read than a journal that focuses on research and the emphasis is on the implications of the results of the study (Oermann et al., 2008).

The DNP capstone author must determine if his/her study or project is worthy of pursuing publication. A topic or an aspect of the project should be chosen carefully when considering writing a manuscript for publication. The author should reflect on the project or parts of the project that are informative and could benefit others, especially those in practice or those who are interested in translating research into practice. The author must remember that something new and novel to editors and reviewers must be presented. Most journals don't have an interest in publishing content or information that has been published before or is already known to the discipline (Nicoll, 2012).

A manuscript should describe the problem addressed in the study, background and significance information, study procedures including recruitment, measurements, and steps in data analysis. In addition, it should include findings and conclusions while addressing limitations (Oermann et al., 2014). Upon reflection, DNP students may recognize fatal flaws within the design or approach of their project. However, there may be aspects of the project that would be helpful to share with others such as literature or state of the science reviews, innovative recruitment procedures, data management information, or maybe even lessons learned (Nicoll, 2012).

What Will You Publish?

Though DNP students may not have had the end (in the form of a manuscript) in mind when starting their graduate school journey, it is important that they convey the exact purpose for the manuscript. For the purposes of a manuscript, it needs to clearly describe the motivation and the intention (Price, 2014) and a description of what will be offered to the reader (Nicoll, 2012). To that end, the author must consider what type of

article will be written for publication. This is an important step in the process as many journals have designated formats for different types of articles.

The “Transformation” Process

The rules associated with seeking an appropriate publication outlet for any manuscript also apply to manuscripts based on DNP capstone projects. Authors should consider which journal might be appropriate for their manuscripts. Authors should review the target audience, types of publications, and impact factor. During this search it may be helpful to identify several keywords that could be used to categorize the work (Nicoll, 2012).

Authors may need to consider what is unique about their manuscript, then seek a journal that is tailored to that specialty or focus. A helpful place to start looking for appropriate journals might be the journals cited in the literature review associated with the DNP capstone project. [The journal directory maintained by Nurse Author & Editor and the International Academy of Nursing Editors \(INANE\)](#), is also a valuable resource. Once appropriate journals have been selected, examine the list of editors and reviewers. Network with these people and query them to determine if the manuscript might be a fit (Nicoll, 2012).

Once a target journal has been identified review the publication for a “template article” (Nicoll, 2012, p. 22). A template article would be one that is similar in nature to the work the author wishes to publish. It may be a similar research design or a similar topic or focus. The author can use the “template article” to help provide guidance in relation to what the manuscript should look like upon submission. The heading and subheading style along with the length of each section can be used to assist the author in generating the manuscript for submission (Nicoll, 2012).

Critically review the current manuscript and contemplate the differences in it and the template article. Consider the overall length as well as the length for each section or heading. Will a chapter based document, ie, the Capstone paper, need to be converted to a much briefer manuscript? The author should appraise the current work for any figures or tables. Some journals are selective in their publication of these. Also, the author must

pay close attention to formatting requirements of the target journal. While most nursing schools require all assignments to be formatted using APA many journals do not.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

While it may be tempting to simply send the most up-to-date version of a scholarly project word processing file to an editor to initiate the review process, please don't. Most editors and reviewers can read upon first glance if the manuscript has been thoughtfully prepared for the readership of a journal. Submitting a manuscript without review and proper formatting typically causes delays in the review process and may even result in a desk rejection from the editor (Holland & Watson, 2012).

Taking time to allow reviewers at the expert as well as the novice level may be of great assistance to an author at any level. Expert reviewers may offer a higher level of critique in which scientific and topic specific mistakes can be noted. Meanwhile, novice reviewers may be able to read the work as a naïve reader and offer opinions about inadequate explanations or connections within the writing (Gray, 2005).

As always, include an appropriate abstract that adheres to the journal guidelines. As a reminder, the abstract should be written last. Many students are asked to write an abstract prior to their start of the Capstone project. Often the purpose of this request is to allow the student the opportunity to articulate their plan in a concise manner. Unfortunately the abstract is often neglected as the project is ending. Technically the abstract should be written last and it should correlate with the findings described throughout the manuscript (Resnick, 2013).

CONCLUSION

DNP graduates and their advisors should work to share salient points of the DNP capstone projects with others in the discipline. While the task of converting the written product of a DNP capstone project or an aspect of it into a manuscript to be considered by a journal may be daunting, press on. It can *and should* be done. Recent graduates should certainly enjoy the success of their accomplishments. But they shouldn't rest too long.

Continuing to work while there is momentum will likely help to disseminate findings and generate interest from others (Nicoll, 2012).

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