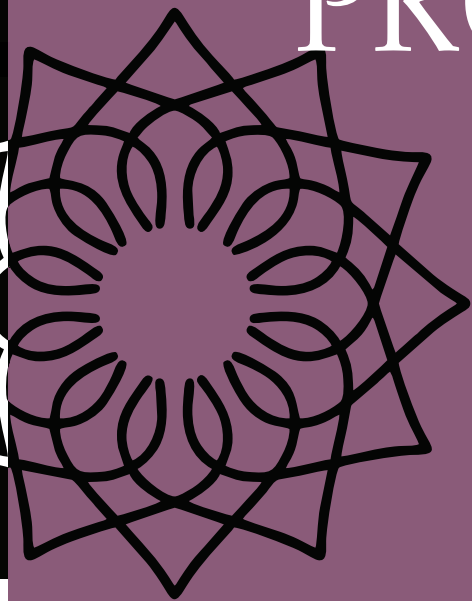


# ***Fast Facts***

*for*

# WRITING THE DNP PROJECT



***Effective  
Structure,  
Content, and  
Presentation***

**Thomas Christenbery**

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Thomas Christenbery, PhD, RN, CNE

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# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xi</i>
<b>1. Quality and Impact of a DNP Project Paper</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Structuring a DNP Project Paper</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>3. IMRaD: Introduction Content Areas for a DNP Project Paper</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>4. IMRaD: Methods Content Areas for a DNP Project Paper</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>5. IMRaD: Results Content for a DNP Project Paper</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>6. IMRaD: Discussion Content for a DNP Project Paper</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>7. Completing the DNP Project Paper</b>	<b>135</b>
<i>Index</i>	<i>143</i>





# Preface

Faculty in schools of nursing often provide Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students an outline to organize a DNP project paper. Outlines provide students an overall view of a DNP project paper and the sections to be completed. In addition, faculty typically include a rubric to help students gauge what level of work is expected to receive a passing grade on a DNP project paper. Outlines and rubrics offer needed foundational direction for writing a DNP project paper; however, outlines and rubrics fall short of providing academic guidance on how to write a robust and scholarly DNP project paper. The purpose of this Fast Facts book is to provide DNP students with resources to develop critical insights and rationale that will support them in writing an impactful DNP project paper. The book enables students to master the “why” and “how” of what to include in each section of a DNP project paper. This book guides students to effectively communicate, in writing, complex issues and solutions surrounding their DNP project topics. This book supports students’ cognitive processes used to comprehend and communicate *structure*, *content*, and *presentation* for their project papers, which cannot be easily fostered by an outline or rubric. Students will be enabled to write about their project topics in a way that is logical, understandable, and relatable to other healthcare practitioners and scholars. Students will receive guidance to support critical thinking and writing skills, scholarly reflection, and sound rationale for developing each section of a project paper. This book fulfills a need for faculty who seek a comprehensive resource for students to use to develop their DNP project papers from conceptualization through dissemination of a final product.

The *Introduction, Methodology, Results, and Discussion (IMRaD)* model is used in this book to describe an overarching structure for a DNP project paper. Rationale for using the IMRaD model as a conventional structure for academic writing in the health sciences is explained. The book demonstrates how to organize an evidence-based practice (EBP) question or quality improvement project within the IMRaD model. Types of EBP questions (i.e., intervention, prognosis/prediction, diagnosis/diagnostic test, etiology, meaning) are reviewed, and how to adapt EBP projects to the IMRaD model is demonstrated. Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence (SQUIRE 2.0) are presented, and adaptation for use with the IMRaD model is included. Each IMRaD section is accompanied by specific areas of content faculty will expect to be covered in each section of a DNP project paper. In addition, each IMRaD section provides topics of discussion that students will want to have with faculty to provide a broader context and meaning for the DNP project paper.

*Thomas Christenbery*

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# Quality and Impact of a DNP Project Paper

After reading this chapter, learners should be able to:

1. Recognize indicators of quality in a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) project paper
2. Describe how quality DNP project papers impact healthcare
3. Determine appropriate use of evidence-based practice (EBP), research, and quality improvement (QI) in a DNP project paper

## **PURPOSE AND VALUE OF THE DNP PROJECT PAPER**

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The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) project embodies the essence of DNP education. DNP projects are hallmarks of nursing scholarship and practice that contribute significantly to the translation of science into clinical practice. In addition, DNP projects are collaborative, integrative experiences that promote important improvements in the implementation and delivery of patient-centered and/or population-based care (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2006). Ultimately, a DNP project prepares students to use the highest levels of knowledge to influence healthcare outcomes through expertise in leadership, policy enactment, education practices, and patient-centered care (VanderKooi, Conrad, & Spoelstra, 2018).

For over 15 years, DNP students have engaged in culminating program projects that characterize advanced practice *quality* and *impact*. A DNP project's quality represents a standard of

excellence that reflects the development and provision of safe, effective, timely, efficient, equitable, and people-centered services to advance desired health outcomes (Richardson, 2000). The impact of DNP projects is evident in reshaping healthcare in the United States (Dunbar-Jacob, Nativio, & Khall, 2013). DNP projects impel the design and evaluation of innovative healthcare models, evaluate cost-effectiveness of care, influence health policy, and promote research-based interventions to optimize patient healthcare outcomes. To document a project's quality and impact, DNP students are generally required to write a comprehensive scholarly paper that emphasizes the planning, implementation, and evaluation components of a project. Some schools allow students to submit a curated collection of published papers, but typically a scholarly paper is required for graduation.

There are several reasons students want to write a successful DNP project paper during their course of academic study. First, completion of a DNP project paper demonstrates a student's capacity to identify and explore a significant healthcare issue and through the use of best evidence provide potential resolutions to healthcare issues. Second, by writing a successful DNP project paper, students display an advanced ability to appraise and synthesize various forms of research and best evidence. Third, DNP students conduct original and substantive work with a specialized health focus, thus the project paper helps solidify a student's expertise in a clinical area. Fourth, the project paper is the first point in dissemination of a student's culminating scholarship. The value of knowledge gained from DNP projects is incalculable and it is imperative that this knowledge be shared broadly. Fifth, a well-crafted DNP project paper often serves as a major stepping stone for student advancement to roles such as professors, authors, policy makers, and research team associates. Completion of a DNP project paper highlights a student's scholarly abilities and it is common for DNP graduates to be called upon by other experts and organizations seeking professionals with noted mastery in a specialized area.

## **ETYMOLOGY AND ETIOLOGY OF REQUIRED WRITTEN WORK FOR A TERMINAL DEGREE**

The DNP project paper is similar in style to written scholarly products in other practice disciplines (e.g., medicine, pharmacy, physical therapy). Culminating, scholarly products in practice