

Dissertation Completion Pathway (DCP)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is DCP?

- Dissertation Completion Pathway (DCP) is a pathway to completing a doctorate.
- DCP serves students who come to NU as “All But Dissertation” (ABD).
- The pathway consists of 3 required “bridge” courses. Successful completion of these DCP courses is required before entering the doctoral program.
 - *DCP-8001: 12 weeks (online)*
 - *DCP-8002: 12 weeks (online)*
 - *DCP-8003: 6 weeks (online with a required virtual Intensive).*
 - *DCP-8003 is typically taken along with DCP-8001 or DCP-8002.*

What are the Admissions Requirements?

- Dissertation Completion Pathway application.
- Minimum GPA of 3.0 in previous doctoral program.
- Must have completed all required doctoral program coursework and/or achieved candidacy at another institution.
- Cannot be academically dismissed from previous doctoral program.
- Previous doctoral program must academically align with a doctoral degree program and specialization offered by National University.
- 7-year maximum for transfer credit from a regionally accredited institution. An exception by the Dean may be granted for credits aged between 8-15 years.

What is the Intensive?

- The Intensive is a virtual event where you will engage in small groups and one-on-one sessions with DCP faculty, leadership, library consultants, and peers toward (a) preparing for the research process, (b) developing critical foundational components needed for successful completion of chapter/section 1 of your dissertation/applied doctoral project, and (c) building a culture of comradery and scholarship with peers, faculty, and deans.

When can I do my Intensive?

- You must be registered for the DCP-8003 course first to be eligible to register for the Intensive.
- You should enroll in the DCP-8003 course concurrently with DCP-8001 or DCP-8002. In extenuating circumstances, it is possible to register for DCP-8003 along with the CMP-XXXX course, but we do not encourage this **practice because**

DCP-8003 helps set you up for success in the CMP-XXXX course, so taking it beforehand is recommended.

- Once you are enrolled in DCP-8003, please contact your Academic Advisor to help you register for the Intensive.
- Intensives occur four times per year and are virtual as of November 2023. Please ask your advisor about the schedule.

What happens at the Intensive?

- The Intensive is virtual as of November 2023. The format of the Intensive is synchronous/asynchronous, meaning some sessions can be completed on your own while other live sessions require attendance online. DCP faculty and leadership will present content related to topics, such as understanding the dissertation/applied doctoral project sequence, building blocks of a doctoral study, and committee formation and communication. We will also have multiple opportunities for small group breakout sessions as well as individual one-on-one sessions with faculty and leadership. DCP students arrive at NU at different places in their journey toward completing their doctoral degree. Our goal is to meet you where you are and provide scaffolded support to help you be successful in the CMP and dissertation/applied doctoral project sequence. To do so, we will ask you to engage with DCP faculty, leadership, and library consultants in small groups and one-on-one sessions to support you in doing the following with your doctoral research study:
 - Conduct scholarly literature searches and literature review outlines,
 - Identify the *problem* and the *gap* and substantiate both with empirical evidence,
 - Craft a *purpose* statement aligned to the problem addressed,
 - Support the alignment of *methodology* to *research questions*,
 - Refine and align all components of a strong dissertation/applied doctoral project topics: problem, purpose, research questions, methodology, and design,
 - Address questions and troubleshoot problems,
 - Embrace a growth mindset approach toward re-entering the doctoral journey, and build comradery with fellow DCP students, faculty, and leadership.

Can I do the Intensive virtually?

- Yes, as of November 2023, our in-person Intensive shifted to 100% virtual. The format of the Intensive is synchronous/asynchronous, meaning some sessions can be completed on your own while other live sessions require attendance online. Our goal is to meet you where you are and provide scaffolded support to help you be successful. To do so, we will ask you to engage with DCP faculty, leadership, and library consultants in small group and one-on-one sessions during the Intensive experience. We have found full engagement is most

effective during the Intensive, and therefore, we require students and faculty to be present during all components of the Intensive.

What is the difference between an applied and theoretical/traditional program?

- The main difference between *theoretical/traditional research* (PhD) and *applied research* (e.g., EdD, DPA, etc.) lies in their focus.
- While a *traditional dissertation* strives to produce new knowledge about an existing problem, an *applied doctoral project* will typically address a specific *practical or professional problem* within a field.
- *Theoretical/traditional (PhD)*: aimed at developing new, fundamental knowledge and a theoretical understanding of humans in the broad disciplinary context without a particular application in mind.
 - All PhD programs are considered theoretical/traditional.
 - The culminating deliverable is a *5-chapter dissertation*.
- *Applied research: practice-based* investigation to acquire new knowledge to address practical and professional objectives.
 - The culminating project for *applied* programs depends on the specific program. Some *applied* programs require a 5-chapter dissertation and other applied programs require a 3-section applied doctoral project. Please review the requirements of the specific program of interest.

I was previously (or am currently) enrolled in an applied program; can I enroll in a PhD program at NU?

- In many cases, applied doctoral programs require fewer credit hours than PhD programs. In rare instances in which applied doctoral programs have similar courses and credit hours as a PhD program, it may be possible to accept the block transfer credit and change programs. When submitting your transcript for review, please inform the Enrollment Advisor if you would like the DCP team to determine eligibility for any program transfer.

I was previously (or am currently) enrolled in a PhD, but I want to change programs. Can I enroll in an applied doctorate program at NU?

- Yes, it is possible. Eligibility would be determined on a case-by-case basis. The program specialization would have to align, and approval by the school dean or dean's designee would be required. To be considered for a program change when entering DCP, please inform the Enrollment Advisor when submitting your transcript for review. The DCP team will work with the dean at each school to identify any program change options.

Who will be on my Dissertation Committee?

- Your committee will consist of 3 members. The dissertation/applied doctoral project **Chair** is the primary member of the committee and will be assigned to you during the first course (CMP-XXXX) after you complete your three DCP courses. Your Chair will be your course instructor and mentor throughout the prospectus and dissertation/applied doctoral project. The department chair of your program will assign your committee Chair based on alignment to your program specialization. You will work one-on-one with your Chair to develop each section of your dissertation/applied doctoral project. Your Chair will provide weekly feedback on your submissions and stay with you throughout the dissertation/applied doctoral project. Once each chapter/section is drafted, your Chair will let you know it is time to submit to the “Doctoral Record” for your Subject Matter Expert (SME) to review and provide feedback.
- Your **Subject Matter Expert (SME)** will also be assigned to you by your school’s Department Chair based on their expertise in your specialization area. The SME will provide feedback on each chapter/major section when drafts are ready for review through the “Doctoral Record.” Once feedback is provided, you will discuss the feedback with your Chair and make any required revisions. Your Chair and SME must approve each chapter/major section of your dissertation/applied doctoral project before moving to the next course.
- Your **Academic Reader (AR)** will also be assigned to you by your school’s Department Chair based on expertise in your specialization area or methodology. The AR will typically only review two documents during the life cycle of your dissertation/applied doctoral project: Proposal and Manuscript. Once your SME has approved your proposal or manuscript, your Chair will let you know it is time to submit to the Doctoral Record for your AR review. You will then work with your Chair to make any suggested revisions before final approval by your Chair. Once your committee approves the final manuscript, you are eligible to complete your final oral defense or final presentation (depending on your program requirements). These three committee members work collaboratively to support you during your doctoral journey.
- For more information, please review the Doctoral Student Experience (DSE) Handbook if you are in the 5-chapter dissertation model found in the [Dissertation Center](#).
- For more information, please review the Applied Doctoral Experience (ADE) Handbook if you are in the 3-section applied doctoral project model found in the [Applied Doctoral Center](#).

How is the committee chosen?

- Your committee will consist of 3 members: Dissertation/Applied Doctoral Project **Chair**, Subject Matter Expert (**SME**), and Academic Reader (**AR**). Each committee member will be assigned to you by the Department Chair of your doctoral program when you enter the prospectus course (CMP-XXXX) after the

successful completion of the DCP coursework. These committee members work collaboratively to support you during your doctoral journey.

Can I pick my committee/Chair?

- Your committee will consist of 3 members: Dissertation/Applied Doctoral Project **Chair**, Subject Matter Expert (**SME**), and Academic Reader (**AR**). Each committee member will be assigned to you by the Department Chair of your doctoral program when you enter the prospectus course (CMP-XXXX) after completing the DCP coursework. The Department Chair will assign your Chair and SME based on their expertise in your program specialization. If you would like to request a specific Chair, you can work with your academic advisor to formally request a Chair. These requests are typically made through the Department Chair, who will try to honor your request if the Chair has room in their caseload.

Can I get a new Chair or committee member if I disagree with my Chair?

- Your Chair is your primary committee member and works in collaboration with the committee to support your progress, not try to derail it. If you disagree with the feedback provided to you by your SME or AR, you can discuss it with your Chair first. In most cases, a Zoom session discussing the rationale for the feedback resolves the concern. If not, your Chair can initiate a meeting with the SME, AR, or full committee to provide clarity and direction. Remember, the main goal of your committee is to move you and your manuscript forward, which requires trust in your Chair, committee, and the iterative process. If there are still concerns, you can work with your academic advisor, who can direct you in making a formal Chair or committee member change.

Will I be required to take extra academic courses beyond the required writing and research courses?

- Once enrolled in the DCP pathway, you will only be required to take the following three courses:
 - *DCP-8001: 12 weeks (online)*
 - *DCP-8002: 12 weeks (online)*
 - *DCP-8003: 6 weeks (online with a required virtual Intensive component and typically taken with DCP-8001 or DCP-8002).*
- Once you complete these courses, you will matriculate into the CMP-XXXX course within your specific school and program to complete the prospectus and dissertation/applied doctoral project course sequence.

What is the application and enrollment process? What determines if I am accepted?

- You will work with an Enrollment Advisor (EA) who is trained and highly knowledgeable about DCP. The EA will guide you through completing the application process and submitting your transcripts for review. The EAs work directly with DCP and school leadership to support you through the application and enrollment process.

I've done a lot of work on my topic, and it's been approved through IRB. Why can't I keep my topic?

- You *may* still be able to keep your topic. It will depend on the relevancy of the topic and problem and the alignment to your program specialization. Please discuss the specifics of your study with the DCP faculty member, who will advise you accordingly.

For more information about Dissertation Completion Pathway, please contact the Office of Graduate Studies at graduatestudies@nu.edu.