Key Differences between the DNP Degree and the PhD Degree

| | **DNP: Practice Focused** | **PhD: Research Focused** |
|---|---|---|
| Degree | Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Degree | Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) |
| Program Focus | Prepare nurse leaders at the highest level of nursing practice to improve patient outcomes and translate research into practice. | Prepare nurses at the highest level of nursing science to conduct research to advance the science of nursing |
| Competencies | AACN Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Practice Nursing<br>Also for the Nurse Practitioner, National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) | AACN The Research-Focused Doctoral Program in Nursing: Pathways to Excellence |
| Program Curriculum | Organizational and systems leadership knowledge for individuals and populations; health policy; translating research into evidence-based practice;<br>quality improvement; patient safety; health care change and practice change | Leadership experience in area of sustained research funding<br>Research methodology and statistical methods<br>High level of expertise in research congruent with focus of academic program |
| Student | Nurse expert in clinical practice and leadership<br>Commitment to practice career<br>Oriented toward improving outcomes of patient care and population health | Researcher<br>Oriented toward developing new nursing knowledge and scientific inquiry |
| Research | Application and translation of available evidence to practice | Generation of new evidence and knowledge |
| Scholarship | Through innovation of practice change, the translation of evidence, and implementation of quality improvement in specific practice settings, systems, or with specific populations to improve health or health outcomes. | Through rigorous research and statistical methodologies that may be broadly applicable or generalizable. |
| Population Focus | Community setting and population | Broadly applicable and generalizable. |
| Outcome | DNP Project | Dissertation |

Adapted from AACN (2014) Contrast Grid. Retrieved from https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/DNP/ContrastGrid.pdf
Adapted from Boise State University School of Nursing Doctor of Nursing Practice Program (n.d.). https://hs.boisestate.edu/nursing/files/2013/02/Phd-DNP-Distinguishing-Characteristics.pdf