



The National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists

PhD Position Statement

The National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists (NACNS) recognizes the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) as the highest level of formal education for those individuals whose career path is to develop science to promote the discipline and practice of nursing. The PhD or related research-focused doctoral programs (e.g. DSN, DNSc) prepare individuals with the knowledge and competencies to conduct independent research to develop the science of nursing, disseminate innovations, and work in collaborative interdisciplinary teams to solve complex health and healthcare problems. These professionals also make significant contributions to the education of future generations of nurses, including clinical nurse specialists.

The NACNS emphasizes that the research-focused doctorate should be built on foundational expertise in the discipline of nursing. The clinical nurse specialist is an expert in the synthesis and application of evidence to address critical health care issues and is well situated to further their education. Attainment of a PhD degree in addition to their graduate advanced practice degree adds value to the clinical nurse specialist's career path, serving to position the clinical nurse specialist to be influential in practice, research and academic arenas. In addition to support of the role, NACNS supports federal funding for nursing advanced degree programs, including all doctoral preparation programs

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