Handbook for the PhD Program In Nursing

Our Programs Pioneered the Past.-Our Research Unlocks the Future

Revised August 2014
Revision History based on 2013-2014 Handbook:

March 2014: reformatted 2012-2013 handbook to include automated table of contents, minimized spaces between paragraphs, fonts and bolding revisions, appendix references; formatted headings/subheadings to feed table of contents.

April 2014: added manuscript option narrative for faculty review and approval; deleted old material from prior curriculum reference to preliminary exams.

August 2014 added tables and timelines to provide additional clarity to options and process. Additional editing to remove duplication in key sections of the handbook was completed. Review by Student and Academic Affairs Office.

August 2014: final review by faculty
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This Handbook, which includes parts of the Graduate School Rules and College of Nursing Rules, does not constitute a contract with the University of Colorado Denver Graduate School or College of Nursing, either expressed or implied. The Graduate School and the College of Nursing reserves the right at any time to change, delete, or add to any of the provisions at its sole discretion. Furthermore, the provisions of this document are designed by the Graduate School and College of Nursing to serve as highly recommended guidelines rather than absolute rules, and exceptions may be made on the basis of extenuating circumstances.
Introduction

In order for nurses to engage in evidence-based practice, nurse scientists are needed to generate evidence, investigate perplexing patient problems, test strategies to increase patient safety and care quality, lead interdisciplinary teams to improve the health care system, and add to the nursing profession’s valuable body of knowledge. Congratulations for pursuing the path to the PhD in Nursing.

This Handbook contains policies and procedures specific to the progression of students enrolled in the PhD in Nursing program. This Handbook should be used in conjunction with the most current issue of:

College of Nursing Student Handbook
http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/nursing/students/Pages/handbooks.aspx

The Graduate School Policies and Procedures (Grad School Rules)

The Graduate Student Handbook
http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/Graduate-School/program-resources/Forms/Graduate%20Student%20Handbook.pdf

Please feel free to contact me with questions or with recommendations for changes in the PhD Handbook.

Best wishes on this most exciting and rewarding journey!

Paula M. Meek

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The PhD Program in Nursing: Outcome Competencies

The Doctor of Philosophy in nursing prepares scientists for stewardship of the nursing discipline and membership in the community of scholars. Doctoral study in nursing engages students in intellectual inquiry, knowledge development, and the conduct of independent research to understand and enhance the health and wellbeing of, and the healthcare for individuals, families, and populations. Doctoral study depends on collaborative mentoring relationships between students and research faculty, other faculty scholars, and active engagement of students in the interdisciplinary community of scholars. Program graduates are prepared to pursue careers in research intensive environments and as leaders of the profession. The PhD Program at the University Of Colorado College Of Nursing is designed to foster the following qualities in graduates of this program (Table 1).

Table 1 Qualities of the PhD Graduate

1. Demonstrates mastery in a selected substantive area of the nursing discipline.
2. Understands methodologies for critiquing, developing, and extending disciplinary knowledge.
3. Pursues learning as a journey of ongoing personal development and excellence in research within and beyond the discipline.
4. Applies logical, critical and creative thinking to a range of research problems.
5. Works both autonomously and collaboratively as a scientist within and beyond the discipline and community of scholars.
6. Commits to ethical social responsibility and action as a scientist.
7. Communicates effectively as a scientist and as a leading member of the discipline.
8. Appreciates an international perspective and cultural sensitivity in research.
9. Embraces the diversity of opportunities for career development, professional roles, and disciplinary leadership as a nurse scientist.

These qualities are the outcome competencies of the PhD program. The qualities are threaded through all of the evaluation milestones from the preliminary examination to the dissertation defense. Each student is encouraged to become familiar with these qualities and explore with their advisor the areas of emphasis needed to manifest them by completion of the program.
I. The Doctor of Philosophy Degree (UC Denver Graduate School)

The degree, Doctor of Philosophy, is awarded by the Graduate School of the University of Colorado Denver, Anschutz Medical Campus. To state the requirements for the degree in terms of credit hours would be misleading because the degree is not conferred merely upon the satisfactory completion of a course of study, however faithfully pursued. Students who receive this degree must demonstrate that they are proficient in some broad subject of learning and that they can critically evaluate work in this field; furthermore, they must have shown the ability to work independently in their chosen field and must have made an original contribution of significance to the advancement of knowledge.

General Requirements

Please refer to University of Colorado Denver / Graduate School Policies and Procedures for all Graduate School requirements and policies. Students are responsible for following all UC Denver Graduate School policies, especially related to deadlines, examinations, and registration. The UC Denver Graduate School Policies and Procedures can be found on the Graduate School web page at:

II. Ph.D. in Nursing Program

Admission Requirements

All doctor of philosophy students are admitted through the Graduate School. Required documents for Graduate School admission are identified at:  
Graduate-School/academic-programs/amc-admissions/get-ready/Pages/Required-Documents.aspx

Eligibility Criteria for Nursing PhD Program Admission are identified below:

- Completion of a baccalaureate or higher degree in nursing from an NLN or CCNE accredited institution.
- A 3.0 undergraduate and/or a 3.5 graduate grade point average.
- Completion of a graduate-level inferential (intermediate) statistics course* with a minimum grade of B (3.0).
- Completion of master’s-level nursing theory course with a minimum grade of B (3.0).
  - If either the graduate-level nursing theory course or the inferential statistics is not reflected in the course title on the transcript, a course description, course outline or other supporting evidence is required.

Applicants whose Master’s Degree is not in Nursing

Applicants who hold an earned master's degree in a field related to nursing, but who do not possess a master's degree in nursing may be admitted to the Ph.D. program pending demonstration of advanced knowledge and skills in a nursing specialty area. Pursuit of an MS degree in Nursing, however, should be seriously considered (See MS to PhD option below). Master’s level courses in Nursing Theory and Inferential Statistics are required pre-requisites or co-requisites to Ph.D. level courses.

MS to PhD

A post baccalaureate MS to PhD option is offered for students with a BS degree in Nursing. A 30 credit MS degree is earned along the way. Please note that credits earned in the master’s program are not part of the typical coursework required to complete the doctoral degree.

The MS to PhD student can obtain a master’s degree in one of the following master’s options:

- iLead: Online Master’s in Nursing Leadership – for more information on the Master’s in Nursing Leadership (iLEAD) option, go to:  
  http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/nursing/programs-admissions/masters-programs/specialties/i-LEAD/Pages/lead-masters.aspx
- Special Studies: Core coursework and additional coursework selected by the student and advisor.
- MS to PhD students also have the option of a master’s in an Advanced Practice Specialty. The specialty options generally exceed 30 credits for the Master’s degree. For more information on the options and plans of study, go to:  
  http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/nursing/programs-admissions/masters-programs/ms-program/Pages/program-overview.aspx
Distance Accessible / Intensives

The Ph.D. in Nursing Program was designed to be “distance accessible”. Course formats generally include the use of asynchronous online platforms augmented with scheduled, synchronous webinars. The second week of each of the first five semesters of coursework, however, is devoted to intensives, a time when students are required to be in residence (physically present) on the Anschutz Medical Campus. During this week, students meet with their major advisors and advisory committees, start new classes in a face-to-face format, attend scheduled enrichment activities, and interact within and among student cohorts to form important bonds for social support. The schedule for intensives week is developed by the Ph.D. Program Director with feedback from students and faculty. The schedule is sent to students at least 8 weeks in advance to allow students to make travel plans.

Degree Requirements

Award of the Ph.D. degree is based on completion of a minimum of 42 credits of graduate-level coursework and 30 dissertation credits. The requirements for the Ph.D. can be expected to take approximately four and one-half years to five years of full-time study (5-8 credits per semester). All students are expected to follow the Curriculum Plan outlined on page 12. Full-time study is defined by the Graduate School as a 5 credits per semester.

According to the policies of the Graduate School, UC Denver, all degree requirements for the Ph.D. must be completed within eight years of matriculation. Students who fail to complete the degree requirements within this eight-year period are subject to termination from the Ph.D. in Nursing Program and the Graduate School. Additionally, the College of Nursing has some degree progression requirements that are more stringent than those outlined in the Graduate School’s Policies and Procedures. In such cases, the Ph.D. in Nursing Program policies will supersede those outlined in the Graduate School Policies and Procedures (e.g. Timeline for Preliminary Examination; Timeline for Comprehensive Examination; Timeline for defense of dissertation proposal). The figure below is designed to provide a visual depiction of the key milestones required for progression and graduation.
The purpose of this handbook is to provide details regarding the required milestones and successful completion of the program. Below is a summary of some of the key milestones:

- A preliminary evaluation at the end of the first year of coursework with a grade of “Pass” or “Pass with conditions”.
- Completion of all coursework with a grade of B- or better, and a minimum Grade Point Average of 3.0 or higher.
- Completion of a comprehensive examination, with the grade of “Pass” by the end of the third year of coursework. Students who pass the comprehensive examination advance to Ph.D. candidacy.
- Successful defense of the dissertation proposal by the end of the fourth year.
- An independent scholarly dissertation thesis and final examination (defense) with a grade of “Pass”.

**Curriculum and Required Courses**

The Ph.D. in Nursing Program facilitates building a community of scholars among faculty and students. When students are admitted to the Program, they are matched with faculty who will provide expert mentorship in the student’s selected research interest, and who will guide the student in the development of their dissertation research.

The curriculum has two program foci: **Biobehavioral Science** and **Health Care Systems Research**. Students from both foci complete a set of core doctoral courses related to advanced knowledge development, research design, and research methods, as well as a set of courses specific to their focal area.
The *Biobehavioral Science Focus* concerns health and illness and the interrelationships among their psychosocial, behavioral, and biological processes. Nurse scientists in this area investigate the prevention, progression, or management of a disease, symptom, or other health state across the life span. The *Health Care Systems Research Focus* concerns the interrelationships among characteristics of health care delivery systems, technologies, and outcomes in a variety of care settings and populations. Scientists in this area of research investigate the unique and cumulative effects of contexts of care and care delivery processes on outcomes with the goal of improving the health and safety of patients and communities through the provision of quality healthcare.

These two foci emphasize substantive knowledge in nursing. Faculty who are nationally recognized experts in the area teach courses in each focal area. Each student builds an area of concentration including in-depth study in the selected focal area. Students’ plans of study are supported by coursework within the discipline of nursing as well as coursework in other disciplines. Students work closely with their major advisor and advisory committee in choosing these elective courses.
**PhD Program Curriculum Plan 2014-2015**

All students are expected to follow the Curriculum Plan outlined below. Students are prohibited from changing the Curriculum Plan and may do so only under unique circumstances and with the approval of their Advisor and the Program Director.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>+ minimum of 30 dissertation credits (NURS8990) after coursework completed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PhD CORE</td>
<td>NURS 7101 Metatheory in Nursing I (3)</td>
<td>NURS 7102 Metatheory in Nursing II (3)</td>
<td>NURS 7202 Role of the Scientist II (2)</td>
<td>Methods (3) (choose 1)</td>
<td>Methods (3) (choose 1)</td>
<td>NURS 7440 Measurement (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NURS 7201 Role of the Scientist I (1)</td>
<td>NURS 7510 Scientific Inquiry Methods (4)</td>
<td>NURS 7621 Qualitative Methods</td>
<td>NURS 7622 Qualitative Methods II</td>
<td>NURS 7632 Quantitative Methods II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits by Focus Area</td>
<td>HCS: 5</td>
<td>HCS: 8 (13)</td>
<td>HCS: 5 (18)</td>
<td>HCS: 6 (24)</td>
<td>HCS: 6 (30)</td>
<td>HCS: 6 (36)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BBS: 5</td>
<td>BBS: 8 (13)</td>
<td>BBS: 5 (18)</td>
<td>BBS: 6 (24)</td>
<td>BBS: 6 (30)</td>
<td>BBS: 6 (36)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Students are required to have 9 hours of elective course work that directly supports their dissertation research.

Although infrequent, the PhD curriculum, course schedules, and offerings are subject to change. Courses are offered pending required minimum enrollment numbers. If curriculum changes are made, courses in the current curriculum will be offered for a specified period of time.
Other Course-Related Policies

Continuous Registration Required

Pre-Candidate Students: All students in the Ph.D. in Nursing Program who have not as yet achieved Candidacy (have not taken or passed their Comprehensive Examination) are expected to register for course credits for EVERY Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters of the Program, including the semester in which their Comprehensive Examination takes place. A pre-Candidate student who fails to register in any given semester could face immediate dismissal from the Program, unless a Leave of Absence has been formally requested and approved by the academic/major advisor and program director.

PhD Candidate Students: (Post-Comprehensive Examination): Program Candidates (students who have successfully passed their Comprehensive examination) must register for a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 dissertation credits each fall and spring semester. It is also essential that students pre-register for courses each semester to avoid course cancellations. Students in dissertation work must also register during the pre-registration period under the section number of their advisor. Notification to students of dates for pre-registration is by student email only. Students must check their student email frequently for important announcements such as registration related information.

Leave of Absence (College of Nursing)

A leave of absence may be granted for up to one year by written request to the Director of the PhD in Nursing Program. If approved, the Director will forward the request to the Graduate School for inclusion in the student’s file. Students who are absent for more than one year will be withdrawn from the Ph.D. program and will have to re-apply and be considered with all other applicants. An approved leave of absence does not automatically extend the time period for earning a degree.

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the College of Nursing (CON) Office of Student Affairs and Diversity, Graduate Advisor(s) and the PhD Program Director in writing, one month prior to the end of the leave of absence to discuss progression in the PhD program and prepare for re-entry.

Readmission of Former Students (College of Nursing)

Students who were previously admitted to the Ph.D. in Nursing program, but who did not complete that degree and who have not been registered for more than 1 year (3 consecutive semesters) must reapply to the Ph.D. in Nursing Program and the Graduate School of the University of Colorado Denver. They must proceed as follows in seeking re-admission:

- Clarify their status with the Director of the Ph.D. in Nursing Program (or their designee) to determine their eligibility for re-admission. Former students must meet all admission criteria currently required by the Graduate School and/or the College of Nursing at the time of their new application.

- Complete a new application to the Ph.D. in Nursing Program and submit the application fee.

- An admission recommendation will be made by a sub-committee of the Ph.D. Committee, convened by the Program Director. The final admission decision will be made by the Graduate School.

- If re-admitted, an individual program plan will be designed for the student which may include testing for validation of current knowledge in courses previously completed.
Transfer Credit

A maximum of 18 credit hours may be transferred to the Ph.D. program, including 9 hours (maximum) allocated for elective credits and 9 hours (maximum) allocated for courses equivalent to one or more of the courses listed on the Course Offering Plan.

Transfer credit is defined as any credit earned at another accredited institution or credits earned as a non-degree student within the UC system. Consistent with the Graduate School policies “Graduate courses taken while the student was enrolled in a graduate program anywhere in the UC system, or an institution with established Memoranda of Understanding with UC Denver are considered resident, not transfer, and therefore fall outside the limits on transfer credits”. Therefore, courses taken through the Nursing Education Exchange (NEXus) system do not count toward the limit on transfer credits.

The process for requesting the approval of transfer credits is clearly outlined in the Graduate School Policies and Procedures and students should review this process carefully. Some of the highlights include:

- The student must complete the REQUEST FOR TRANSFER OF CREDIT FORM (See pg. 39), attach official transcripts, and submit to the Director of the Ph.D. Program following signature by the student’s Academic Advisor.
- Official transcripts showing courses to be considered for transfer MUST accompany the REQUEST FOR TRANSFER CREDIT FORM. To be official, the transcript must be original showing the seal of the institution(s).
- The institution where the course was taken must be accredited.
- The course(s) must be at the Graduate level (500/5000 or above).
- The course(s) must have a “letter” grade.
- The student must have obtained a grade of “B minus” or higher in each requested transfer course.
- The course(s) to be transferred must be approved by the PhD Program Director and the Graduate School.
- The course(s) must be transferred prior to the semester in which the Comprehensive examination is taken.
- The course cannot be officially transferred (credit given) until the student has satisfactorily completed one semester of enrollment with a minimum G.P.A. of 3.0.
- Transfer credits do not reduce the residency requirement but may reduce the amount of work required at UC Denver for the degree.

NEXus Courses

The Nursing Education Exchange (NEXus) consists of distant accessible graduate courses offered by a collaborative of member universities. As a founding member of NEXus, the College of Nursing endorses this opportunity for students to expand their access to quality courses. NEXus provides a broad array of courses that may serve as electives to support students’ dissertations. For a listing of available course each semester, go to: http://www.winnexus.org/. Remember that all elective courses, including those offered through NEXus, must be approved by the student’s advisor. In addition, prior to registering, NEXus courses must also be approved by the Program Director. Students interested in registering for a NEXus course should contact: Stephanie Aguinaldo at STEPHANIE.AGUINALDO@UCDENVER.EDU.

Since NEXus courses are taken outside of the University, the student must transfer the course(s) into the University of Colorado Graduate School (see instructions outlined above). Because all required coursework, including electives, must be successfully completed or transferred into the Graduate School prior to taking the Comprehensive Examination,
students should NOT be enrolled in NEXus courses the semester prior to taking their Comprehensive Examination.

**Challenging or “Testing Out” of Graduate Course work**

Credit by examination is not allowed for graduate students. Programs may allow a student to challenge and test out of a given course, but the student does not register or receive credit for it. If a student successfully challenges a course, the program can require the student to take a different course or an elective. In all cases, the student must meet the minimum of 42 credits of coursework plus 30 dissertation credits required for the PhD degree.

**Independent Study Policy**

Independent study courses are a mechanism by which a student and their Academic Advisor can develop and customize a course to be taken as an elective. CON policy states, however, that no required (non-elective) courses may be taken for credit as independent study without the prior approval of the Student Academic Affairs Committee. Independent study is arranged with the approval of the Academic Advisor and the faculty member supervising the study (instructor); the student and instructor may name the course as it will appear on the transcript.

To enroll in an independent study course, students must first complete the Independent Study Approval Form available at:

[http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/nursing/students/Documents/thesis-IndependentStudyForm.pdf](http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/nursing/students/Documents/thesis-IndependentStudyForm.pdf). Course objectives, anticipated competencies and outcomes, activities, assignments, grading criteria, and the number of course credits must be collaboratively determined by the student and the instructor, clearly written in a Word document outlining the independent study course plan, and attached to the Independent Study Approval Form. The student must obtain all needed signatures on the Independent Study Approval Form (with attachments) and submit it to the Program Director for final approval and signature. The Program Director will forward the approved form with attachments to the office of the Coordinator of Graduate Programs.

**Grades**

The grading system at the University of Colorado Denver, is based on letter grades with point equivalence as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>In Progress (used for dissertation / thesis credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete; automatically changes to F after one year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progression and Quality of Work

For details, please refer to the University of Colorado, Denver Graduate School Policies and Procedures:

http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/Graduate-School/Pages/default.aspx

Note that some of the highlights include:

- Failure to maintain a 3.00 GPA will result in students being placed on academic probation.
- Transfer credits will not be included in the GPA calculation
- Courses in which grades fall below B- (2.7) may not be applied toward the PhD degree, and consequently, the course must be retaken in order to achieve a grade of B- or better. The original course and grade (below B-) will appear, however, on the student's transcript. All grades received while enrolled in the Ph.D. program, including those of courses that need to be repeated (grade of below B-), will be included in the GPA calculation.
- Any course taken more than seven years (7) prior to applying for Ph.D. candidacy (Comprehensive Exam), whether taken at CU or transferred, must be evaluated to be current by the Ph.D. Program Director or designee(s). The Program Director will advise the Graduate School in writing that such courses have been validated and deemed to be current prior to the student's advancement to Candidacy.

The policies of the Ph.D. in Nursing Program may be more stringent than the Graduate School’s policies. In such cases, the Ph.D. in Nursing Program policies will supersede the Graduate School standards. Consequently, please note that the Ph.D. in Nursing Program policy, as documented in this Handbook, specifies that:

- The status of a student that receives a grade of less than a B- two times or receives less than a B- in any two courses, at any time in the program, will be referred to the Student Academic Appeals Committee (SAAC) for a recommendation about progression. The student may complete and submit to SAAC, a Petition for Academic Progression:
  http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/nursing/students/Documents/PetitionforAcademicProgression.pdf
- A recommendation for Progression, Suspension or Withdrawal will be made by the SAAC. A recommendation for Suspension or Withdrawal will be forwarded by the SAAC to the Dean of the Graduate School for action. The Graduate School has a separate appeals process as listed in the Graduate School Handbook.

Academic Probation and Dismissal

When a student’s cumulative GPA falls below 3.00, the student will be placed on Academic Probation, and the student and the Director of the PhD in Nursing Program will be notified by the Graduate School. The Program Director will notify the student’s academic advisor. The student will have two semesters to raise the cumulative GPA to at least 3.0. With the recommendation of the Program Director and concurrence of the Graduate School Dean, failure to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 within the two semesters will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

Pass/Fail Policy

Courses taken for graduate degrees may not be taken pass/fail. All courses taken to satisfy the minimum requirements for a degree and listed on advancement to candidacy forms shall
be taken on the A to F grading system. The grade of B- is the lowest possible passing grade for the College of Nursing graduate programs.

**CON Policy on Incomplete Grades**

CON Policy states that

> “An incomplete grade is given only when students, for reasons beyond their control, have been unable to complete the course requirements. It is understood that a substantial amount of work must have been satisfactorily completed before such a grade is given.”

If students have not completed a substantial amount of work, they should be advised to drop the course within the first two weeks of the term. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of faculty by written request of the student, with an agreement made as to the time frame and work required to complete the course satisfactorily.

The issue is especially important with web-based courses. These courses are removed from the server within 2 to 3 weeks after the completion of a term to provide server space for the next term’s offering. Students with an Incomplete for a web-based course must definitely have a substantial amount of work completed in the course since it will be impossible for them to access these courses on an indefinite basis. A grade of Incomplete is not to be used for students who are failing a course and want extra time to improve their grade. In this case the grade of F is given. Please be sure to follow the CON policy when considering an incomplete for a course and evaluate whether an incomplete or dropping the course is the appropriate action.

**Grade Changes**

A grade of Incomplete (I) will remain on the transcript even after course requirements are completed. The course will appear on the transcript a second time with the final letter grade noted. A grade of Incomplete will be changed to an F after one year if no grade updates are submitted by the instructor.

A grade of In Progress (IP) is used only for dissertation credits and is changed to final letter grades when the final approved dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School office.

In addition, letter grades may be changed in the event of clerical or administrative error. However, no other grade changes are allowed by the Graduate School following the last day of the semester of enrollment. Students are not allowed to perform additional work for a course already completed in order to have their grade improved.

**Academic Grievances**

Students who feel that they have been treated unfairly or outside of normal program policies may file a grievance in accordance with procedures outlined in the College of Nursing Student Handbook:


A student enrolled in the Ph.D. in Nursing Program must follow the process and procedures outlined in the College of Nursing Student Handbook prior to submitting a grievance to the Graduate School. For information on filing a grievance with the Graduate School, see the Graduate School Policies and Procedures:

Student Ethical Conduct

Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of personal integrity and professional ethics. Students must adhere to the College of Nursing Honor and Conduct Code, as printed in the College of Nursing Student Handbook:


Students who do not meet these standards and/or who violate the codes may be dismissed immediately or placed on disciplinary probation by the Dean of the CON or the Dean of the Graduate School upon recommendation of the CON Student Academic Affairs Committee and/or the Graduate School Student Conduct and Academic Appeals Committee. Also refer to the Graduate School Policies and Procedures:


English Proficiency

Applicants to the Ph.D. in Nursing Program whose native language is not English must take either the Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam and must score above 80 on the TOEFL (subscores of 20 in Reading, Listening, and Speaking, and 24 in Writing) or 6.5 on the IELTS (subscores of 5.5 in each area). A student may be referred to the College of Nursing’s Office of Student Affairs and Diversity for services to support the student's academic life.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The University of Colorado, Denver/ and the College of Nursing support the spirit and the letter of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This law is designed to help persons with disabilities access the physical facilities, academic programs and employment opportunities of the institution. A disabilities handbook, Disability Service Resource Guide, has been developed to acquaint students, faculty and staff with various aspects of the law. Questions regarding the ADA should be directed to the Disability Resources & Services (DRS) office located in Room W1103 of Building 500; or call the DRS office at 303-724-5640.
III. Policies and Procedures for Academic Advisement for Ph.D. Students

At the time of admission to the Ph.D. program, the student is assigned an Academic/Major Advisor by the PhD Program Director. Selection of the advisor is based on the match with the faculty member’s program of research. The following policies and procedures of the Graduate School and the College of Nursing govern this process.

**Academic/Major Advisor**

The **Academic Advisor** is designated for the student in the **First Year** to assist in selecting and sequencing courses and planning other activities to progress through the program to candidacy status.

- The projected degree plan is formed in the first year for meeting the degree requirements, remediating deficiencies, and dates are identified for preliminary and comprehensive exams.

- The First Year **Academic Advisor** can be the **Academic/Major Advisor**, however this may be modified during progression through the program. The Academic/Major advisor will be the student’s main partner and guide through the PhD program.
  - The **Academic/ Major Advisor** will assist:
    - the student in sequencing courses, selecting elective courses, and planning other activities to progress through the program.
    - with the plan of study, including plans for additional course requirements specified on admission, and required dates for preliminary and comprehensive exams in collaboration with the student.
    - with and approves the selection of elective courses to ensure that they are supportive of the projected dissertation research.
    - the student in preparing for the Comprehensive Examination, Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation defense and selection of the Advisory Committee members that will help the student through these milestones.

**Student’s role in Academic Advisement**

Students need to meet with their **Academic/Major Advisor** regularly for discussions of research ideas, grant and course opportunities and other advising. The student is responsible for initiating these meetings. It is recommended that meetings occur a minimum of twice each semester, once during the intensive period and at least one other time during the semester.

**Advisory Committees**

Through the process of advancing to candidacy and graduation there are additional faculty that will provide advice to the student and be responsible for determining successful completion of all the milestones (Figure 1 pg 9) except the preliminary exam. The committees are The **Comprehensive Examination Advisory Committee**, **Proposal Defense Committee** and **Dissertation Defense Committee**. Ideally the membership of all these committees is part or all the same faculty, and represents a stable advisory group for the student. Table 2 is designed to highlight the timeline, purpose, composition and documents that are associated with each advisory committee.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Advisory Committees Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehensive Examination Advisory Committee</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose(s)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Membership</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate faculty appointments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documents and Forms (appendix)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submitted to</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each Advisory Committee follows these guidelines as determined by Graduate School Rules and the College of Nursing PhD Program.

- The student in collaboration with their Academic/ Major Advisor is responsible for selecting the members that serve on each Advisory Committees.
  - The Academic/Major Advisor is a member of all and must hold a regular UC Denver Graduate Faculty Appointment
  - The additional members must hold regular or special Graduate Faculty appointments with UC Denver.
  - One “outside” member must be part of the Dissertation proposal and thesis defense committee, but also may be part of the comprehensive examination advisory committee.
    - The “outside member” must hold a primary appointment outside the College of Nursing.
    - A non-nurse is preferred. A nurse with special expertise in the student's area of interest from another University may be acceptable as the outside member.
    - If the outside member does not hold a current UC Denver Graduate Faculty Appointment, the Major Advisor must request an appointment by submission of a letter and a completed Graduate School biosketch form for this individual. The processing of graduate faculty membership can take several weeks and should be initiated as soon as the individual is selected for an advisory committee. (Suggested time to allow 10 weeks).
    - Any costs incurred to bring an outside member to campus or connect the member via interactive video are the responsibility of the student, not the CON.

- The members of the advisory committees will determine the order of readers for the Comprehensive Examination, Proposal Defense and Dissertation Defense committee meetings. The order of readers of the examination is The Academic/Major Advisor, first reader, second reader, third reader, and fourth reader.
  - The first reader will chair the comprehensive examination and dissertation thesis defense committee. The Academic/Major Advisor is ineligible to chair per Graduate School Rules.
  - The outside member usually serves as the either third or fourth (last) reader.

- The student's Advisory Committee membership as well as examinations and defense schedule must be approved by the Program Director.

- For further information on student advising, please refer to the CON Student Advising Policy.
IV. Policies and Procedures for Preliminary Examinations

As specified in the Graduate School Rules, the College of Nursing PhD Program is responsible for ensuring that students are qualified for doctoral study by successfully passing a preliminary examination (herein termed an evaluation). The CON PhD Preliminary Evaluation is designed as a summative evaluation of the student’s first year of doctoral study and progress toward meeting the Qualities of the PhD Graduate (Table 1). Also see Graduate Student Handbook: http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/Graduate-School/program-resources/Forms/Graduate%20Student%20Handbook.pdf

Eligibility

To be eligible for the preliminary examination, students must have:

- Successfully completed required coursework in the Year 1 Fall and Spring semesters with a grade of B- or better with a cumulative GPA of > 3.0. (See PhD Program Curriculum Plan on p.10)
- Eliminated any deficiencies in prerequisites (inferential statistics or masters-level nursing theory course).

Process

The Preliminary Evaluation form can be found on page 36 and is also available for faculty on the CON S: drive (S: / PhD Advisory Committee / Forms / Preliminary Evaluation – First Year PhD Nursing Students). Students will access the form through the online College of Nursing Student Handbook.

- The Preliminary Examination form will be completed by:
  - Course faculty following each course they teach in the first year curriculum.
  - Major advisors
  - Students
    - In addition, students will complete a self-evaluation for each of the nine categories of evaluation.
    - The self-evaluation will be typed, no more than 3 pages, single-spaced, with 12 point font and one-inch margins, and consistent with APA style.

Submission

Students, course faculty, and major advisors will submit the form (students the self-evaluation) by email attachment to the CON Graduate Programs Office no later than 5PM MDT on the fourth Friday of May (china.hutchins@ucdenver.edu).

Disposition of e-files

The CON Graduate Programs Office will collate files pertaining to each student and forward the files to each student’s Major Advisor for synthesis.

PhD Faculty Preliminary Evaluation Meeting

The Preliminary Evaluation meeting will be coordinated by the PhD Program Director and will occur annually in June. This meeting will be considered confidential and information from the meeting will not be shared with any students or other faculty not in attendance except as deemed appropriate by the PhD Program director.
• A quorum for this meeting will include a majority of the first year course faculty and major advisors.
• All faculty members of the PhD Program will be invited. Academic/Major advisors will **present collated/synthesized** results of preliminary evaluation documents to the PhD faculty.
• The Academic/Major Advisor will recommend;
  - **Pass**-Students who receive a pass will progress in the program.
  - **Pass with Conditions**-Students who receive a pass with conditions will receive a remediation plan but will progress in the program during the course of the plan.
    - A recommendation for **pass with conditions** requires a time-limited remediation plan (no longer than 6 months), which has been prepared by the student’s Advisor/Advisory Committee and brought to this meeting for discussion. The remediation plan content and timeline will be formalized through faculty discussion at the Preliminary Evaluation Meeting.
    - Students who fulfill the plan as outlined and in the specified time frame will continue to progress in the program.
    - Students who fail to fulfill the plan will receive a grade of failure on the Preliminary Evaluation and the Program Director will recommend that the Graduate School withdraw the student from the program.
  - **Fail**-A student who fails the evaluation is subject to immediate dismissal from the Graduate School upon the recommendation of the program and concurrence of the Dean of the Graduate School.

    - A recommendation for failure should include information about when and how the student was notified of being in jeopardy in the program (e.g., counseling, Unsatisfactory Progress Notice)
• Following discussion, faculty will determine by majority vote whether the student receives a pass, pass with conditions, or fail.

**Notification.**

The Program Director is responsible for:

• Explaining to students the Preliminary Evaluation process and timeline.
• Formally notifying students of the results of the Preliminary Evaluation.
• Copying the Major Advisor on all communication with each student.
• Filing a copy of the notification letter in the student’s file in the CON Office of Student Affairs and Diversity, Graduate Advisor(s)
• Notifying the Graduate School of the pass/fail results.

**Academic Grievance.**

Students have the right to file a grievance to request a review of decisions and actions.

• The Graduate School grievance procedures are outlined in the Graduate Student Handbook.
V. Policies and Procedures for Comprehensive Examinations

Admission to Candidacy

Admission to candidacy occurs with the completion of the comprehensive exam. After completing or registering for all program-required non-thesis coursework, and concurrently with applying for admission to candidacy for the Ph.D., students must take a comprehensive examination in their respective discipline. UC Denver Graduate School Rules (October 2013) apply to comprehensive exams of all CON PhD students.

Comprehensive Examination

The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to provide the candidate with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of a broad range of knowledge in nursing science. While specific courses completed by the candidate are important, their content has been tested as a portion of the grading process for the course. The comprehensive examination is not a re-examination of course content. The candidate should demonstrate synthesis of nursing knowledge, including a mastery of a broad range of knowledge in these areas of nursing science:

- theory construction, analysis, and evaluation;
- research and analytic methods required to answer significant scientific questions;
- existing and emerging knowledge in the nursing focus area, area of concentration; and
- relevant knowledge from other fields that contribute to nursing science.

The comprehensive examination must be completed no later than the end of the student's third year. Under extenuating circumstances, and with the recommendation of the program director and concurrence of the Dean of the Graduate school, the examination may be taken during the fourth year.

Comprehensive Examination Process Overview

Completion of the comprehensive examination is a process that culminates in the in person Oral Examination. The comprehensive exam process begins in the second year of the program and is composed of three main steps:

- Naming members - Identification of the comprehensive exam committee members
- Written readiness portion - Preparing the comprehensive paper
- Oral Examination – Formal Comprehensive exam.

The Comprehensive Examination will be taken during or immediately following the last semester of formal course work (all required nursing course work is completed). Graduate School policy states this exam must be completed successfully within 3 years or with permission of PhD and Graduate School Dean within 4 years, under certain circumstances. The Major Advisor and the initial two advisory committee members shall assess the completion of the program requirements and readiness of the student to take the Comprehensive Examination. Students must be registered for a minimum of one credit at the time of the examination.

Each of the steps is outlined in detail on the following pages. Naming members of the committee is the initial step and is carried out in conjunction with the student’s major advisor. This committee will meet during the second and third year and help determine the specifics of the written readiness portion and the oral examination. Once the committee determines that the comprehensive paper is acceptable, the oral comprehensive exam follows. Successful completion of both steps of the process will result in the student moving to candidacy.
Figure 2 Visual map of the Comprehensive Examination Process

Step one - Make up the Comprehensive Examination committee

The Comprehensive examination committee is composed of a minimum of three members (Major advisor and other faculty selected by the Major Advisor and the student and may include an “outside member”).

- According to Graduate School and CON Policies, the major advisor cannot serve as Chair of the oral exam.
  - The processing of graduate faculty membership can take several weeks, so the process must be initiated as early as possible to avoid delay of the examination date. (Suggested time - 10 weeks).

- The members of the Comprehensive Examination advisory committee in conjunction with the student will determine the order of readers of the Comprehensive Examination.
  - The order of readers of the examination is Academic/Major Advisor, first reader, second reader, third reader, and fourth reader (if applicable).
  - The outside member usually serves as the either third or fourth (last) reader.
  - The Chair of the exam should be the first reader and is required to hold a regular UC Graduate School appointment.
• The student, with the Major Advisor, provides nominees to the PhD Program Director to fill the committee appointments a minimum of eight weeks prior to the expected date of the examination. It is recommended that this occur once the outside member has received the UC Graduate School appointment.

**Step Two - Written Readiness portion - Preparing the comprehensive paper**

The comprehensive paper is a preliminary indicator of readiness to take the oral examination and is used by the committee as a basis for developing questions for the examination; it is not evaluated as part of the examination. The Academic/Major Advisor provides guidance and consultation to the student in selecting the topic of the comprehensive paper and in projecting the overall development of the topic. The topic should be carefully considered for doctoral level thinking; there should be potential for sufficient breadth and depth in addressing the topic so that basic assumptions are examined and well analyzed, and a direction that the student can see leading to a creative approach to the topic. Once the topic and the direction have been clarified, the student completes the paper independent of assistance from the Academic/Major Advisor or committee members. Independence is defined as a version that is free of editing, proofing or major revisions provided by the Academic/Major Advisor or committee members. It is strongly recommended that the Academic/Major Advisor, first and second readers approve an outline for the paper prior to initiating this work.

• The comprehensive paper guidelines are; no more than 20 typed, double-spaced pages in length (exclusive of references), prepared using the APA format and equivalent to a publishable manuscript.
  - The paper should reflect original thinking of the student, drawing on and reflecting synthesis of knowledge and skills acquired during the doctoral program experience. While the paper should build from the doctoral program experience, it is to move beyond work already completed as requirements for courses.
  - The paper may provide foundational material that the student will use in conceptualizing the dissertation, but the comprehensive paper is to reflect knowledge and intellectual skills acquired in the program and not narrowly focused on the projected dissertation. *(The faculty encourages students to submit comprehensive papers for publication on advice of the Advisory Committee)*.
  - The CON PhD Program policy requires that major papers such as the comprehensive examination paper, dissertation proposal, and dissertation defense drafts be submitted to committee members with **at least 4 weeks** time allowed for reading and response.
    - This policy is written to accommodate the varying teaching, research, clinical, and travel schedules of the faculty and is respectful of their time and efforts. Usually the Major Advisor/Mentor and First Reader read major papers identified above, to conduct initial editing and make recommendations for changes prior to submitting the document to the other two members of the committee.
    - However, the time frame for submission should be adjusted accordingly based on committee members specific schedule demands.
  - The "Application for Candidacy" form needs to be submitted approximately 10 weeks prior to the planned date for the comprehensive examination.
The student will obtain instructions and an Application for Admission to Candidacy form from the UC Denver Graduate School Office.

When the student completes and returns this form, the Graduate School Office will: send a copy of this form to the program; type a notice of examination and distribute copies of it to the student and examination committee members; provide an Examination Results Form for the Committee to sign after the exam.

The student also will obtain and complete a Request for Scheduling Exam form and obtain the signature of the College of Nursing PhD Program Director. Both forms are due in the Graduate School Office at least two weeks before the examination. The CON Graduate Programs Advisor can assist the student to schedule a room for the exam.

− Usually revisions are requested and the student then submits the paper to the full Comprehensive Examination Advisory committee in final form. The final written portion will be evaluated on the criteria below.

**Table 3 Evaluation Criteria for evaluating the comprehensive paper**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for the evaluation of the comprehensive paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The paper is focused on a substantive topic in the discipline of nursing that synthesizes the theory, research, and philosophy components of the doctoral program, and that emphasizes nursing knowledge components of the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The paper is focused, concise, logically ordered, and readable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The discussion reflects breadth of knowledge in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The discussion reflects depth of understanding of the issues and problems related to the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Original ideas and sound rationale for those ideas are presented; the significance of the ideas for the discipline of nursing is convincing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The student's position on controversial issues in the area of inquiry is defended with sound rationale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The content of the paper is well founded and accurate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Scholarly methods and approaches to inquiry are reflected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Citation and documentation of sources used are accurate and comprehensive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

− Consensus that the student is ready to take the oral comprehensive examination is required by the Comprehensive Examination Advisory committee members prior to confirming the date and time of the oral comprehensive examination.

− If the Comprehensive Examination Advisory committee *does not agree* that the student is ready the student will not advance to the oral comprehensive exam.

− Registration must be maintained according to the rules of the Graduate School; these credits may be dissertation credits (up to the maximum allowable of ten credits).

− The original planned oral comprehensive examination is to be canceled, and rescheduled when the Committee requires resubmission of the paper.
The Committee will meet with the student to convey its evaluative comments and provide guidance regarding the steps required to demonstrate readiness to take the oral exam.

A written contract of agreement between the committee and student is to be prepared and distributed to all concerned with the time frame for completion of the written readiness portion specified.

The contract may include an agreement that the student completes additional course work, critical reading, or tutoring, among other steps.

- The committee's second assessment of readiness for the comprehensive examination will be accomplished by review of one revision of part or all of the original paper.
- If the requirements are not satisfied within the agreed-upon time frame, the student will not be eligible to take the comprehensive examination (oral portion), and will be dismissed from the program.

- The Major Advisor will notify the student of the Committee's evaluation of the paper no later than four weeks after it is presented to the Committee (approximately 6 weeks prior to the planned oral comprehensive). The final approved comprehensive paper is retained in the student's official file in the College of Nursing.

*Note: It is essential that the student allow sufficient time for committee members to read these documents.*

**Step Three - Oral portion - Comprehensive exam**

UC Denver Graduate School Rules apply to the conduct of and scoring of the oral portion of the exam.

- All members must be present for this exam. However one member, not the chair or student, may participate via interactive video only. Any costs incurred in the interactive video exam are the responsibility of the student.

- When the student passes the comprehensive examination, the Graduate School is notified of the results of the examination.

- Following completion of the comprehensive examination the Comprehensive Examination Advisory Committee concludes its activities and is discontinued. The same committee or a new committee will be appointed for the dissertation.

*Note: it is in the student’s best interest to maintain a consistent committee for smoother progression through the dissertation process. However, due to faculty retirements, change of topic or interest area and expertise needed, it is possible the student will need to reconstitute the committee. The PhD Program Director’s approval is required for this change and former and new members of the committee must be notified by the student.*

- If a student fails to complete all requirements for the degree within **eight years** of the date of matriculation, and within **four years** of the date the comprehensive examination was passed, a second examination similar in extent to the first will be required before the candidate may take the final examination.
VI. Policies and Procedures for Dissertation

The dissertation process is the culmination of knowledge gained in the program and a clear depiction that the student demonstrates the qualities of a PhD graduate outlined in Table 1. A dissertation thesis is the written example of these qualities and is based on an original investigation that demonstrates scholarly and critical judgment, as well as familiarity with tools and methods of research. The dissertation thesis must be written on a subject approved by the student’s Dissertation Committee. To be acceptable, the dissertation thesis should be a worthwhile contribution to knowledge in the student's area of concentration and make a strong contribution to nursing science. The rules of the UC Denver Graduate School (July 2000) apply to the dissertation process. Upon successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination and attainment of Doctoral Candidate status, the candidate will select a Dissertation Advisor or Mentor.

Dissertation Proposal and Thesis Advisory Committee

The Major /Dissertation Advisor and the candidate will determine the membership of the dissertation committee, which may include all or none of the comprehensive exam committee members.

Note: it is in the student’s best interest to maintain a consistent committee for smoother progression through the dissertation process.

- The composition of the committee will be a minimum of four Graduate faculty member with one of the four the outside member. All four committee members must hold appointments as Graduate Faculty.

- As with the comprehensive committee, members will be designated by the student as: Dissertation Advisor, 1st Reader, 2nd Reader, 3rd Reader, and 4th Reader according to their expected contributions to the thesis. Formal agreement to serve on the committee will be obtained on the Dissertation Committee Membership form.

- Although the Dissertation Advisor will guide the student through the thesis this person cannot serve as Chair of the defense examination. Therefore the first reader is usually the person selected to chair the dissertation thesis defense examination. Refer to Graduate School Rules on Thesis for other details.

- At least one member must be from outside the College of Nursing. The outside member shall represent the Dean of the Graduate School at the defense. The same guidelines for an outside member that are described under the comprehensive examination committee members (pg. 24) apply.

- The PhD Program Director must approve the Dissertation Advisory Committee. Changes in committee membership shall be processed similarly.

Early in the dissertation development, the student should meet with the Dissertation Advisory Committee to discuss the proposed topic and to make tentative plans for the preparation of the dissertation proposal and propose a timeframe for the dissertation process.

Dissertation Proposal

The student must submit for approval by the Dissertation Committee a written proposal of plans for the doctoral dissertation research. This plan must consist of a general description of the proposed research and its original contribution to the field, and a description of research design and methods.
In the UC Denver College of Nursing, the dissertation proposal is usually in the format of the first three chapters of the dissertation:

- Chapter 1, Introduction, problem statement, significance, purpose, etc.;
- Chapter 2, Literature Review and Conceptual Framework if appropriate;
- Chapter 3, Methods.

Table 4 provides an overview of the dissertation proposal content and the dissertation thesis options (traditional and manuscript options).

**Table 4 Proposal and Dissertation Options Crosswalk Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section (chapter)</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Tradional</th>
<th>Manuscript Option</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (1)</td>
<td>Introduction&lt;br&gt;• Purpose&lt;br&gt;• Rationale&lt;br&gt;• Hypotheses / research questions&lt;br&gt;• Limitations&lt;br&gt;• Implications for Nursing&lt;br&gt;• Definitions</td>
<td>Same as proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (2)</td>
<td>Comprehensive Review of the Literature</td>
<td>Same as proposal</td>
<td>➤ Example Article—Narrative or focused Review or Concept Analysis Paper as part of the chapter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (3)</td>
<td>Methods&lt;br&gt;• Design&lt;br&gt;• Sample&lt;br&gt;• Setting&lt;br&gt;• Procedures&lt;br&gt;• Analysis strategies</td>
<td>Same as proposal</td>
<td>➤ Example Article — Methodology based article – Analysis procedure, Instrument testing, pilot work. Part of the chapter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (4)</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td></td>
<td>➤ Example Article – Part or all of the results can serve as part of the dissertation results and conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (5)</td>
<td>Discussion and Conclusions&lt;br&gt;• Limitations&lt;br&gt;• Implications for further research&lt;br&gt;• Implications for Nursing</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>References</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Appendices&lt;br&gt;(Examples-Human subject approval and consent, instruments, etc.),</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Adapted from Locke (2013) and American Psychological Association publication guidelines 6th ed.
The written dissertation proposal should be circulated to the Dissertation Committee at least four weeks prior to the formal presentation (the CON calls this meeting the Proposal Defense). The written dissertation proposal shall be approved by each of the Dissertation Committee members prior to the Proposal Defense. While it is helpful to have all members of the dissertation committee present at the proposal defense, it is permissible to have one or two members (not the advisor) join by telephone. The Dissertation Advisor may chair the proposal defense as this meeting is a CON requirement rather than the Graduate School’s requirement. At the end of the meeting the members of the committee must sign the Approval of Dissertation Proposal form to indicate their contract with the student to conduct the dissertation as approved. The completed Approval of Dissertation Proposal form shall be submitted to the PhD Program Director.

Initiating the Proposed Research

The proposed research must have written approval from all members of the Dissertation Committee and the Institutional Review Boards of the university [Colorado Multi-Institutional Review Board (COMIRB)] and any data collection sites prior to beginning any data collection. All research conducted for the PhD degree must meet regulatory standards specified by federal, state, and local agencies regarding ethical research, animal use, human subjects, and environmental safety. Students are listed as the PI of projects submitted to the COMIRB office; the mentor is also listed. All students must complete all training and certification required by the COMIRB office, including HIPAA training and certification and updates. If another institution is involved in or the site of data collection, e.g., the VA or The Children’s Hospital, students are also responsible for fulfilling requirements of that institution. Students are referred to the [http://www.UCHSC.edu/comirb](http://www.UCHSC.edu/comirb) web page for specific advisement regarding this process.

Research process advisement and follow up

Following the proposal meeting, by the Graduate School Rules, the dissertation examination committee must meet every 12 months (telephone conference is allowed) to evaluate the student’s progress and ensure satisfactory progress since the previous meeting. The Committee Chair will complete the Dissertation Advisory Committee meeting form summarizing the student’s progress, or lack thereof, and send copies to the student, the primary mentor if not the Chair, the Program Director and the Graduate Dean. Major modifications in the design and analysis of the dissertation must receive committee approval in writing. In case of non-satisfactory performance, steps to be taken to rectify the situation should be suggested in the report.

Students must register for a minimum of 30 credits of NURS 8990, using the section number of the Dissertation Advisor. Graduate School Rules apply to the allotments and distribution of these credits. A student must also be registered for 5 credits in the semester of defense examination, even if this semester is summer term. If the student has not defended at the time 30 credits are completed, the student will continue to register for credits according to Graduate School policies through the semester of the dissertation defense examination.

Dissertation Thesis completion

The dissertation must be completed and submitted in written form to the Committee members at least 30 days before the expected date of the Final Examination (Dissertation Defense). Members of the committee should provide feedback regarding major concerns about the written thesis as soon as possible to the Dissertation chair. Approval by the Dissertation Committee must be obtained prior to scheduling the Final Examination. Students must comply with deadlines and rules for submission and defense examination of the completed dissertation as stated by the Rules of the UC Denver Graduate School (October, 2013) and UC Denver Academic Calendar. See Graduate School rules [http://www.UCHSC.edu/gs/gs](http://www.UCHSC.edu/gs/gs)
After the dissertation has been completed and before the degree is conferred, a final examination on the dissertation and related topics is conducted in two parts, an oral presentation of the dissertation research that is open to the public, called the Public Seminar, and a closed examination conducted by the examining committee. NOTE: Graduate School rules require that the dissertation advisor/mentor not chair the defense examination. Therefore the first reader is usually the chair of the exam. This person also signs the top line of the signature page, and approves and signs the form to schedule the exam.

**Manuscript Option**

Students have the option to include published articles or submissions under review within their dissertation. Publication of research and other scholarly products is an important milestone in the development of the young scholar completing his or her PhD.

With approval of the Dissertation Advisor, and written permission from the publisher, students may include published or pre-published work relevant to the student’s research and incorporate these materials into the dissertation if these works contribute overall to the logical flow or understanding of concepts and underlying theoretical basis for the study, identify underlying problems, illuminate issues with study design or methods, contribute to clarifying development of instruments, present pilot data or instrument validation findings, discuss analytic approaches, help portray or illustrate findings, and/or promote interpretation, discussion and dissemination of the findings of the study.

To include published or submitted manuscripts, the following conditions apply:

- The student will work with the Dissertation Advisor and committee members as appropriate to explore the use of the manuscript option. The Dissertation Advisor will have final approval for the manuscript option.
- The included manuscript or portions of the manuscript must be submitted prior to the final copyright published version.
- Inclusion of publications or submissions from prior work conducted for a DNP Capstone Project must have prior approval from the Dissertation Advisor.
- The inclusion of a manuscript must logically flow within the chapter structure, be relevant, and read as one cohesive document.
- The format and chapter structure of the manuscript option is the same as the traditional dissertation.
- If a submitted manuscript has been accepted for publication or has already been published, the student will use APA format to reference the article in the reference list.
- The student will NOT include the actual published article within the dissertation.
- The student is responsible for securing any permission to use copyrighted material from the publisher or owner of the copyright. Documentation of this permission is included in the Appendix of the dissertation.

**Graduate School Rules:**

The PhD Program Director will approve the student's thesis defense committee and the examination schedule. The Graduate School must be notified on the appropriate forms at least two weeks before the exam. The Graduate School will send announcements of the examination to appropriate faculty members, and the signature form will be sent to the program office to be placed in the student's file for use at the examination. The Graduate School will also post the notice of the final exam. A student must be registered at the time of the examination as noted in
the Graduate School Handbook. All members of the committee must be present for the examination. One member, not the chairperson or the student, may participate by interactive video. Any costs incurred in the interactive video exam are the responsibility of the student. The examination form is signed by the committee and returned to the Graduate School Office. Please see Graduate School Rules for explanation of examination results (pass/fail).

The dissertation must comply with the specifications of the Graduate School. A manual of Graduate School specification for doctoral dissertations and a checklist for such mechanical features is included in the Ph.D. Thesis Defense/Graduation Packet that is obtained from the UC Denver Graduate School Office. One formally approved printed or typewritten copy of the thesis and two original abstracts must be filed in the Office of the Dean of Graduate School at least two weeks before the date on which the degree is to be conferred. An abstract, not to exceed 350 words, should be submitted for publication in Dissertation Abstracts International.

**Note:** Please pay attention to deadlines. Following the thesis defense examination the student has 60 days to complete the dissertation and submit the written copies as outlined above. However, each semester pertinent deadlines are posted in the UC Denver Academic Calendar, on the web pages of the Graduate School, and sent via email to graduate students. These deadlines will determine in which semester the student receives a diploma following thesis submission. It is helpful to plan ahead; for example, if a student plans to graduate in May, the last day to file the examination scheduling form may be mid-April. The last day to take the thesis examination would be early May and the final copy must be submitted by May mid-May.

In addition, the Graduate School has a policy stating that to participate in Spring commencement activities (UC Denver commencement ceremonies, Graduate School and CON Convocation), a student must defend her/his thesis by no later than April 1st and submit the final copy to the Graduate School by a specific date (mid-May). Students defending after this date but before deadlines noted in the previous paragraph can still receive a diploma for spring semester but not participate in the commencement ceremonies until the following spring.

The Graduate School Web pages, Handbook, and thesis rules take precedent. Please refer to these policies for each step in the PhD program from Preliminary Examination, through Comprehensive Examination, and Dissertation. [Http://www.UCHSC.edu/gs/gs](http://www.UCHSC.edu/gs/gs)

The UC Denver Campus holds only one commencement ceremony and convocation ceremony per year, usually the Friday prior to Memorial Day. At this time degrees are conferred. The CON and Graduate School must be notified in writing (diploma card) of a student’s plan to participate in the ceremony. Full academic regalia are required and may be rented.
Philosophy

University of Colorado Denver College of Nursing, as an integral part of its parent institution, is dedicated to the pursuit of higher learning grounded in the arts, sciences, and humanities. The College of Nursing shares the missions of University of Colorado Denver

- improving human health by educating health practitioners
- delivering exemplary health care
- conducting research in the health sciences.

The missions of the institution are directed toward a diverse community. The university acknowledges, values, fosters and benefits from the unique qualities, rich histories and wide range of cultural values. The philosophy and mission of the College of Nursing are focused on education, research, reflective practice, and service within nursing.

The College of Nursing faculty believe nursing is a professional discipline with academic and practice dimensions. As a profession, nursing serves society through delivery of direct and indirect health care services to individuals, families and communities in local, regional, national, and international contexts. Nursing is theory-guided, evidence-based, and focused on holistic, relationship-centered caring that facilitates health and healing. As a profession, nursing is committed to ensuring quality health care for all. Nurses engage in political leadership to improve the health and health care of the society they serve. As a discipline, nursing is committed to

- a search for knowledge regarding human experiences of health-illness-healing and the human/technology interface
- development and testing of explanatory models of health, illness, and healing
- positive influence on the environmental contexts of health and health care
- promotion of quality and cost effective outcomes of nursing care.

The College of Nursing faculty believe that generation of disciplinary knowledge is founded upon pluralistic forms of inquiry, continual dialogue with nursing practice, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The College of Nursing faculty believe that university-based nursing education is responsible for preparing nurses for professional and discipline-related roles. Thus the faculty believe in the equivalent importance of undergraduate education for practice, and leadership and graduate education for advanced practice and knowledge generation. The faculty believe in advocacy for social justice, responsiveness to society’s needs and changing local, national and global health care environments. They are committed to promoting reflective practice with inherent reciprocity among nursing practice, theory, and research in all educational programs. The faculty further believe that preparation for various nursing roles requires education in the arts and sciences foundational to nursing and in substantive disciplinary knowledge regarding caring in the human health experience across the lifespan. The faculty believe that contemporary nursing education and practice require a commitment to diversity, interdisciplinary partnerships, and a grounding in faculty practice. This faculty practice models expert care and community service; provides opportunities to develop innovative models of health care delivery; improves access to care for underserved populations; engages in clinical inquiry; and tests nursing theories. Contemporary nursing education also is facilitated by articulated degree programs, flexible and self-directed programs that incorporate lifelong learning, innovative educational technologies, and inter-institutional collaboration.
Advisory Committee Agreement

Name of Doctoral Student: ________________________________________________
(type or print)

I hereby request the appointment of the following Graduate Faculty of the College of Nursing to serve as my Major Advisor and members (2) of my Advisory Committee; they will serve in this advisory capacity and as Chair and two of the required four members of my Comprehensive Examination Committee. Each of these individuals has indicated willingness to serve, and my First Year Advisor has indicated agreement, by their signatures below. I understand that upon successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination, this committee will be dissolved, and that appointment of my Dissertation Committee requires separate action.

**Major Advisor:**

__________________________________________  ____________________________  __________
(type or print)               Signature           Date

**Committee member:**

__________________________________________  ____________________________  __________
(type or print)               Signature           Date

**Committee member:**

__________________________________________  ____________________________  __________
(type or print)               Signature           Date

**First Year Advisor notified:**

__________________________________________  ____________________________  __________
(type or print)               Signature           Date

**Doctoral Student:** ______________________________________________________
(signature)                    Date

Submit this form to the UC Denver CON Graduate Programs Office
# Preliminary Evaluation – First Year PhD Nursing Students

Name: ________________________________     Faculty: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<th>NA</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Progress toward demonstrating mastery in a selected substantive area of the nursing discipline</td>
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<td>Clearly identifies and increasingly focuses within a substantive area of interest (research interest).</td>
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<td>Analyzes theoretical and empirical literature in relation to own research interest.</td>
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<td>Formulates a researchable problem in relation to own research interest.</td>
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<td>Proposes a formalized research question in own research interest.</td>
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<td>2. Progress toward understanding methodologies for critiquing, developing, and extending disciplinary knowledge</td>
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<td>Analyzes and critiques multiple perspectives of the nursing discipline’s central values and phenomena of interest.</td>
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<td>Analyzes, critiques, and applies different methods of theory development in nursing.</td>
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<td>Develops a middle range theoretical knowledge structure related to own research interest.</td>
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<td>Critically analyzes the major empirical qualitative and quantitative research designs.</td>
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<td>Conducts a critical review of existing literature in a substantive area of nursing science.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critically analyzes the major empirical qualitative and quantitative research designs used to build substantive knowledge.</td>
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<td>Progress toward the pursuit of learning as a journey of ongoing personal development and excellence in research within and beyond the discipline.</td>
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<td>Demonstrates that development as a nurse scientist is a personal priority.</td>
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<td>Meets deadlines for course assignments.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promptly responds to communications.</td>
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<td>Engages with faculty and fellow students in a scholarly and professional manner.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Progress toward applying logical, critical, and creative thinking to a range of research problems</td>
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<td>Proposes a design to answer a researchable question developed from a critical review of existing knowledge and application of an appropriate mid-range theory.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Progress toward working both autonomously and collaboratively as a scientist within and beyond the discipline and community of scholars</td>
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<td>Initiates regular meetings with major advisor to work toward overall progress in pursuit of doctoral degree.</td>
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<td>Demonstrates an understanding of the role of the major advisor in relation to course faculty and overall progress in the program.</td>
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<td>Works with major advisor to identify internal and external faculty members for advisory committee and future comprehensive exam and dissertation committees.</td>
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<td>Pursues colleagueship within program cohort.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Progress toward commitment to ethical social responsibility and action as a scientist</td>
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<td>Completes IRB and HIPAA certification.</td>
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<td>Evaluates the role of the researcher as it pertains to integrity and ethics.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Progress toward communicating effectively as a scientist and as a leading member of the discipline</td>
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<td>Identifies strengths and limitations in written and verbal communications.</td>
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<td>Seeks opportunities to strengthen communication skills.</td>
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<td>Communicates clearly and promptly with course faculty.</td>
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<td>Works with course faculty and major advisor to plan for publication(s) relevant to dissertation topic.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Progress toward appreciating an international perspective and cultural sensitivity in research</td>
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<td>Evaluates nursing knowledge as encompassing diverse ways of knowing and diverse knowledge structures.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Progress toward embracing the diversity of opportunities for career development, professional roles, and disciplinary leadership as a nurse scientist, scholar, educator, and mentor</td>
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<td>Analyzes the career trajectory of a scholar in a research area of interest.</td>
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</table>

Comments:
Approval of Dissertation Proposal/Dissertation Proposal Defense Examination

The following members of the Dissertation Committee have approved the dissertation proposal submitted by:

__________________________________________
Doctoral Candidate

Completion of this form verifies prior approval of committee members by the PhD Program Director and approval of Graduate Faculty Membership for all members by the UC Denver Graduate School. The signed form indicates that a formal Dissertation Proposal Defense Examination was successfully completed.

Dissertation Advisor/Mentor ____________________________________________
  (signature)  Date

1st Reader ____________________________________________
  (signature)  Date

2nd Reader ____________________________________________
  (signature)  Date

3rd Reader ____________________________________________
  (signature)  Date

4th Reader ____________________________________________
  (signature)  Date

Student’s Mailing Address: ____________________________________________
  ____________________________________________
  ____________________________________________

Phone #: ____________________________

This form is to be submitted to the PhD Program Director, Graduate Programs Office
INSTRUCTIONS

Complete this form and obtain signatures as indicated below. Return the form with official transcript to the Graduate School. Conditions listed below must be fulfilled before request can be acted upon by the Dean of the Graduate School.

1. Official transcript showing courses recommended for transfer must accompany this request. To be official, a transcript must show the seal of the institution. Students transferring credits from within the CU system need not attach a transcript.

2. A statement confirming that the courses were not used toward a bachelor’s degree is necessary if the courses recommended for transfer were taken at the University of Colorado while the student was an undergraduate.

3. Courses used toward one master’s degree cannot be used toward another master’s degree; appropriate courses used toward a master’s degree may be used toward a doctoral degree.

4. Grades in the courses recommended for transfer must be no lower than B.

5. Institutions from which courses are recommended for transfer must be accredited.
REQUEST FOR TRANSFER OF CREDIT

Dean of the Graduate School
University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus

Date

Student's name and address

a candidate for the degree has requested that graduate work from the institutions listed below be transferred to his/her record at the University of Colorado. It is recommended that the following courses be transferred:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semi/Qtr</th>
<th>Term/Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
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</table>

Recommended by (Student's advisor)

Request for above transfer of credit approved:

__________________________
Graduate School, Health Sciences Center

Recommended by (Program director)

Date

Date

Distribution (to be made by Graduate School) to be as follows: White = Graduate School; Pink = student; Blue = program. Revised 10/08