

Procedure Number: 614a
Policy Name: Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Procedure
Reviewed by: Nursing Graduate Council
Last Review Date: 09/06/2019

Intent to Take Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

Students must confer with the permanent faculty advisor regarding their readiness for the doctoral comprehensive examination. Submission of the application to take the doctoral comprehensive examination will serve as an indication of student intent and readiness for examination. The doctoral comprehensive examination application must be submitted to The PhD Program Director by September 24 (fall semester), February 14 (spring semester) or July 9 (summer semester, if available).

Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Committee Determination

A committee of three faculty members with associate or full graduate faculty status will comprise the Examination Committee (the Convener and at least one other member must have full graduate faculty status). The student may request, in writing to the PhD Program Director, one member for the examining committee. Two members with content expertise will be recommended by the PhD Faculty. The PhD Program Director will consider these recommendations in appointing and notifying the three faculty members of their appointment to serve as examiners. One faculty member will be designated the convener of the committee. Faculty will serve on no more than three Examination Committees in a semester. Faculty may be allowed to be an observing member of the Examination Committee, for the purposes of orientation to the process. The examination reviews and scores of faculty who are participating in this manner will not be counted in the evaluation of the student's examination.

Students are expected to demonstrate the following:

- The ability to systematically explore a concept or phenomenon demonstrating nursing discipline knowledge.
- The ability to critically analyze and synthesize the literature, supporting the development of a cogent argument and meaningful, defensible conclusions.
- The ability to demonstrate knowledge of scholarly tools in the advancement of new knowledge.
- The ability to communicate a line of inquiry and synthesis of the specific field of interest clearly and logically.

The student may ask the Convener of the Examination Committee questions about the examination process. Faculty (advisor, examining committee members, or any other faculty member) may not provide feedback on any part of the student's work prior to completion of the examination. The examination is to be completed entirely independently by the student.

Criteria for Evaluation of the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

Evaluation criteria include the following:

Nursing discipline knowledge

- Explicate and evaluate theoretical underpinnings referenced in written comprehensive examination using documented criteria and standards.
- Specify theoretical statements from referenced theory. The theoretical statements may include definitional statements, existence statements, and relational (associative and causal) statements.
- Select two theoretical statements referenced above and address the following:
 - Analyze the assumptions, structure and implications of each statement
 - Judge each statement's adequacy and appropriateness for directing the development of nursing knowledge.
 - Analyze the potential benefit and ethical implications with rural populations.

Knowledge in area of interest/inquiry

- Synthesize the state of knowledge
- Identify significant gaps in knowledge
- Identify how new knowledge would benefit the discipline of nursing

Methodologic and analytic knowledge (scholarly tools, research methodologies, analytic tools)

- Identify the philosophical underpinnings of the method referenced in written comprehensive examination
- Identify the strengths and limitations in
 - Design
 - Methods
 - Analysis

Written Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

An electronic copy of the written examination, in MS Word format, is to be submitted to the PhD Program Director by the date indicated in the Comprehensive Examination Deadlines table. The PhD Program Director will distribute the examination to the Examination Committee.

Examination Committee members will meet within ten business days of receiving the paper. If two of the three members indicate the paper is satisfactory, the committee will schedule the student oral examination. The convener will notify the student in writing of the date, time, and location within one week following the meeting. Written feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the written examination will be provided to the student, and will form the basis of areas to be addressed in the oral examination, if the written examination is determined to be satisfactory.

If a student's written examination is determined to be unsatisfactory, the convener will notify the student in writing along with the Examining Committee's recommendations for improvement. It is recommended that the student make an appointment to meet with the convener to review recommendations. The student may continue course work except for Dissertation credits (NURS999). The re-take examination will be graded by the original Examining Committee whenever possible. Upon passing the written doctoral comprehensive examination, the oral doctoral comprehensive examination will be convened.

Format

Options for doctoral comprehensive examination format include a research grant proposal or a publishable manuscript prepared for a peer-reviewed journal. If either of these formats does not logically allow the student to meet all criteria for evaluation, a maximum of 5 additional double-spaced pages may be included to address the missing content areas. Students are highly encouraged to use these additional pages to demonstrate their comprehensive knowledge of the examination areas. Specific areas to include would be those that were not addressed in the written grant or manuscript, developed to demonstrate how these areas inform the primary examination and fully address examination criteria. Papers must be typed using Times New Roman 12-point font and single-spaced using the following format requirements:

The **research grant proposal** will use the format required by the National Institutes of Health R-series awards, limited to a maximum of 13 pages (similar to that of the R01 funding mechanism). The description for the required components is based on the PHS SF424 (R&R) Application Guide for NIH and Other PHS Agencies, unless otherwise indicated.

- Specific Aims (1 page)

State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved.

List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology.

- Research Strategy (12 pages)

Organize the Research Strategy in the specified order using the instructions provided below. Start each section with the appropriate section heading – Significance, Innovation, Approach. Cite published experimental details in the Research Strategy section and provide the full reference in the Bibliography and References Cited section (not included in the page limit).

- Significance

- Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses.
- Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields.
- Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

- Innovation

- Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms.
- Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.
- Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.

- Approach

- Include a synthesis of a review of the literature and preliminary studies that provide justification and feasibility for the project (Russell & Morrison, 2011).
- Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project.
- Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted as well as any resource sharing plans as appropriate.
- Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.
- If there are multiple Specific Aims, Significance, Innovation and Approach may be addressed for each Specific Aim individually, or may address Significance, Innovation and Approach for all of the Specific Aims collectively.
- Timetable
- Future Directions

A ***publishable manuscript*** should address the specific author guidelines of a peer-reviewed journal that is appropriate for the topic and methods. The appropriate journal is determined in collaboration with the student's advisor. A copy of the author guidelines is to be attached to the completed paper. The length of the manuscript should be limited to a maximum of 13 single-spaced pages.

Oral Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

The examination committee's written feedback regarding the student's performance on the written portion of the doctoral comprehensive examination will provide the basis for the oral comprehensive examination. The oral doctoral comprehensive examination will be scheduled within 10 business days following the communicated results of grading of the written portion of the examination. Students may be at a distance for the oral examination, as long as technology can be used to deliver oral and visual communication with the examining committee.

During the oral doctoral comprehensive examination, the student will have no more than 25 minutes to address the areas of weakness identified in the written examination. The Examination Committee will then address questions to the student concerning the three areas of evaluation and feedback from the written doctoral comprehensive examination. Immediately following the oral doctoral comprehensive examination, the Examination Committee will meet in executive session to determine whether the student has passed the examination. The Examination Committee will consider the established criteria for the doctoral comprehensive examination and the ability of the student to discuss the criteria in a knowledgeable manner during the oral doctoral comprehensive examination. Two out of the three examiners must concur in order for the student to pass the examination. Students will be apprised of the final outcome of the oral comprehensive examination within 2 business days.

Grading

The student will be notified verbally and in writing of the Examination Committee's decision. The convener will notify the School of Graduate Studies and the PhD Program Director utilizing the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination form that a student has been successful. A written summary report will be prepared by the convener. The written summary report will be provided to the student and a copy placed in the student's file. A copy of this written report will be forwarded to the student's advisor, if the advisor was not a member of the examining committee.

In the event that the student is not successful, the Examination Committee will provide the student with guidelines for improving performance. The convener will note in the student's file that the student had been unsuccessful with passage of the first doctoral comprehensive examination attempt.

Students who do not pass the doctoral comprehensive examination may repeat the procedure once, in accordance with the School of Graduate Studies' policy.

The student who does not successfully complete the doctoral comprehensive examination in two attempts is academically disqualified to continue in the PhD program.

Comprehensive Examination Deadlines

(may vary depending upon Academic Calendar for the semester)

	Fall Deadlines	Spring Deadlines	Summer Deadlines
Submission of application	Sept 24	February 14	July 9
Appointment of Exam Committee	October 15	March 6	July 30
Notification to student	October 22	March 13	August 6
Submission of written exam	November 5	March 27	August 20
Grading of written exam	November 19	April 10	September 3
Completion of oral exam	December 6	April 24	September 17

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