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University Policies & College of Nursing Overview

Handbook Introduction
The PhD Program Handbook provides information to students and faculty to facilitate student advising.

General Information
This document is for informational purposes and is neither a contract nor an offer to contract. The College of Nursing reserves the right to change any provision or requirement at any time without notice. This material supplements the University of Arizona Catalog, Graduate College Policies and the Schedule of Classes. Additional information may be found at the following web sites:

The University of Arizona
The University of Arizona Catalog
The Graduate College
The College of Nursing

The PhD Program Handbook is designed as a resource for students and faculty. Relevant policies and procedures of the University of Arizona, Graduate College and College of Nursing are included in this handbook. Much of the information is online; therefore, the actual web sites are listed for the official information on policies and procedures. Where information is not available online, a brief description is provided. Additional information can be obtained from the Office of Student Support and Community Engagement (OSSCE). Students are responsible to know and adhere to all established policies and procedures.

Relationship to Other Documents
The PhD Program Handbook is intended to be used in conjunction with other university documents including, but not limited to, those named and linked above. Students should first consult their Program Handbook, relevant Clinical Guidelines Handbooks and then consult the appropriate Graduate College or university policies when questions arise. Many polices in the PhD Program Handbook are specific to students in the program and within the College of Nursing. All students, faculty and staff are expected to read the handbook and be familiar with college and university policies. The most current copy of the PhD Program Handbook is available on the College of Nursing’s website for public access.

In addition to this handbook, students must review the Policies & Procedures as posted to the College of Nursing’s website. These policies include (but are not limited to):

- Obligation to self-report
- Code of Ethics for Nurses
- Use of Social Media
- Clinical Policies (technical/essential qualifications, immunizations, uniforms, etc.)
- Graduation

The College of Nursing upholds all University Policies related to but not limited to the following:

- Absence and Class Participation
- Threatening Behavior
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Code of Academic Integrity
- Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment
Systems & Resources for College of Nursing Students

Systems
There are a number of university systems that students in College of Nursing programs will utilize. Students will need to use the following systems (links provided for tutorials):

- **UAccess Student**
- **Desire2Learn (D2L)**
- **Assessment Systems** (Examity, Examsoft, Kaplan, ATI, etc.)
- **GradPath** (all graduate students)

Students completing clinical work as part of their program will be oriented to other systems throughout their programs. All students should review the Student Technology Needs as listed by the college’s Learning & Healthcare Technology Innovations team.

UA Student Email
Upon admission, all students are given an official University of Arizona email address (@email.arizona.edu). Email sent to this address can be checked remotely or forwarded to the student’s phone. This address must be checked daily, as it is the official source of communication between faculty, staff and students. Students are responsible for all program updates and requests sent to this address.

Offices & Departments
Office of Student Support and Community Engagement (OSSCE)
OSSCE works collaboratively to support the educational mission of the College of Nursing. OSSCE is responsible for student services including current student academic advising, recruitment, admissions, progression, academic support services, graduation, student-centered events and College of Nursing scholarships.

Students may contact OSSCE via email (entry@nursing.arizona.edu or advanced@nursing.arizona.edu) or by calling 520-626-3808. When contacting the OSSCE, students should have the Student ID number, the year admitted to current program, and (if applicable) specialty (for dual doctoral degree students). Students are encouraged to make an appointment in person or by phone ahead of time.

Learning and HealthCare Technology Innovations (LHTI)
Learning and HealthCare Technology provides assistance to enhance the students’ learning experience. The LHTI department is responsible for technology support and the development of enabling technologies for students, faculty and staff. A wide range of supportive services are available students via the LHTI Help Page. LHTI also provides technology recommendations and requirements for students, available on the Help page.

Financial Aid & Scholarship Information
Doctoral students in the College of Nursing are eligible for financial aid and scholarships. The College of Nursing offers scholarships on a yearly basis and requires all interested students to submit an application. An email is sent to all newly admitted and current students during the spring term with relevant information. All students are strongly encouraged to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Many college and university scholarships rely on information provided by the FAFSA to be awarded. Additionally, students may seek to use loans or grants to cover tuition and fees expenses. The following is a list of university resources for students with financial aid questions:

Office of Scholarships & Financial Aid
http://financialaid.arizona.edu/
Doctoral students in the College of Nursing are assigned alphabetically (last name) to counselors in the Office of Scholarships & Financial Aid. Students with questions or concerns should use the contact information on OSFA’s website to reach out to the appropriate individual for questions related to financial aid.

**Scholarship Universe**
https://scholarshipuniverse.arizona.edu/suha

The University of Arizona maintains a comprehensive database of scholarships available to students in all programs and majors. Students may log in with their NetID to search for opportunities and complete applications. All College of Nursing scholarship applications must be submitted through Scholarship Universe.

**Disability Resource Center**
https://drc.arizona.edu/

For students with disabilities who anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of the program should meet with the appropriate course chair or program coordinator as early as possible to determine if accommodations are necessary. If formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, students will need to complete the accommodations request form online to register with the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268). To arrange for reasonable accommodations, students are also responsible for immediately notifying the course chair(s) of each course regarding eligibility for reasonable accommodations. Early notification ensures the most effective accommodation and support. Students may also wish to take advantage of the **Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques (SALT) Center** for additional support services. Students may also contact OSSCE for assistance in navigating these resources, or for connection with the college’s **Academic Success Coach**.
Academic Policies & Procedures for PhD Students

Line of Communication

The CON is committed to the creation of an environment which promotes the student learning experience. Open, respectful dialogue between students and faculty is critical to the enrichment of the learning experience.

In order to facilitate the open communication between students and faculty, the CON has outlined a line of communication to resolve academic issues that may arise in the classroom and/or at the clinical site.

Student issues or concerns need to be addressed promptly and according to the established line of communication outlined below. Dialog with the next person in the line of communication is necessary only after the prior contact does not lead to resolution.

1. Course Instructor
2. Course Chair (if applicable)
3. Program Director
4. Division Chair
5. Dean of the College of Nursing

Contact OSSCE at 520-626-3808 for questions about the line of communication or policy concerns or email advanced@nursing.arizona.edu. The Graduate College also provides resources for students related to grievances as linked on their website.

Petitions

A graduate petition may be required when a student is requesting an exception to policy, retroactive change to enrollment, etc. More information can be found on the Graduate College’s Petition User Guides page.

All petitions must be submitted through GradPath. Students may contact the Graduate College or OSSCE for assistance in completing the electronic petition form.

Academic Progression

RISE & On-Campus Program Requirements

RISE is the acronym for “Resident Intensive Summer Experience.” RISE is typically held on the University of Arizona campus in Tucson for 5 days in August, prior to the beginning of the fall term. During RISE, students are immersed in intensive scholarly, role or clinical laboratory experiences punctuated with time for meeting with advisors and committee members. Students have opportunities to become acquainted with other students, faculty and staff, to learn to use a variety of instructional technologies and to learn more about their program and the College of Nursing. PhD and dual PhD-DNP students are required to attend RISE three times.

Faculty Advisor Role and Assignment

The role of the faculty advisor is to mentor and guide the student throughout the program of study. The advisor will guide the student to determine the plan for completing the degree requirements, facilitate accessing resources of the University and the College of Nursing, and assist the student in understanding relevant policies and procedures. The faculty advisor may or may not be the chairperson of the student’s comprehensive examination or dissertation committee.

Switching Faculty Advisors

Students may change faculty advisors as their professional interests change. In order to change advisors, the student must complete the DNP and PhD Program: Change of Advisor Form. The form is available in on the college’s Student
Resources page. Approval from the student’s current and new advisor is required. Routing instructions are included on the form.

Grading and Program Progression
A high level of performance is expected of students enrolled in the PhD program. To remain enrolled in the PhD degree program, a student must be making satisfactory progress toward completion of the degree. Students should review the College of Nursing’s Grading Policy Statement.

The College of Nursing enforces the university’s policies on Graduate Academic Standing, Progress and Probation with the following additions:

1) Satisfactory progress is defined as earning of grades A (4.0) or B (3.0) in any course. Grades below a B (3.0) in any course, regardless of the student’s GPA, are viewed as unsatisfactory academic performance and no course with a grade lower than a B may be included on the student’s official plan of study in GradPath. Students must repeat all courses where a C, D, or E is earned.
   a. A student may attempt the same course no more than twice. Repeating of a course prior to completion of the dissertation may result in an extension of time to degree.
   b. If the student does not earn an A, or B the second time, then the student shall be recommended to the Graduate College for dismissal from the PhD program.

2) A student must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or better to be considered in good standing and to be awarded the PhD degree. Students achieving less than a 3.0 GPA, in any semester, will be placed on academic probation, per University policy. If a student is placed on probation:
   a. The student must meet with their faculty advisor to devise a written action plan for remediation
   b. The plan will be submitted using the Student Progression Report (SPR) form to the Director of the PhD Program and OSSCE.

3) Students on academic probation have two (2) consecutive semesters to raise the GPA to 3.0 or better. Failure to remediate during those two semesters will result in a recommendation to the Graduate College for disqualification and dismissal from the PhD program (see University policy for more information).
   a. Students who are dismissed may apply for readmission to a degree program once they achieve a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 through additional course work taken in the non-degree status. Additional course work may be taken in the College of Nursing. Readmission must be supported by the PhD Curriculum and Instructional Support Committee and the Director of the PhD Program and approved by the Dean of the Graduate College.

4) Grades for 920 course and other graduate level project courses that continue for longer than one term will be awarded using the S (superior), P (pass), F (failure) on the basis of the approved goals achieved during the semester of enrollment. If the student passes the course, then the units of credit may be applied toward the degree. A grade of “F” may not be used on the Plan of Study, or towards the required 18 units for graduation. Grades (S, P, or F) awarded for NURS 920 units do not factor into the GPA.

Unsatisfactory Grade Notification

Midterm Notification
Midterm notification is a two-step process:

- OSSCE will send an email at midterm (fall, spring & summer) to all students as a reminder to check their course progression. Students will be directed to check the D2L gradebooks for each course with special attention to any missing grades/assignments. The reminder email will encourage students to connect directly with the course chair for support or clarification of any items. Additionally, students will be provided with a link to the
program handbook to review the progression policies.

- OSSCE will send an email at midterm (fall, spring & summer) to all **faculty** as a reminder to ensure that all completed assignments and grades are posted to the D2L gradebook. The gradebook should allow the student to see their current grade, and what changes (if any) should be made to improve before the end of the term. Faculty are encouraged to complete a SPR for any student achieving less than an 80% at midterm so they may have the opportunity to improve and pass the course. Course chairs may also choose to refer students prior to midterm to OSSCE, the Writing Coach and/or the Academic Success course via an SPR for support.

**End of Term Notification**

The College of Nursing provides notification each semester to students who have earned grades of “C” or lower in doctoral courses. Notification is provided by an email to the student’s University of Arizona account. Students who earn grade “E” in core courses will be provided with a recommendation for dismissal notice via email to the student’s University of Arizona account.

**Grade Appeal**

All graduate students at the university may appeal a grade. According to university policy, the basis for filing a grade appeal in any course is limited to fundamental fairness in treatment of the student by the instructor, as specified by the syllabus supplied to students at the beginning of the course. When considering a grade appeal, a student should meet with an OSSCE team member to review the required steps and timelines. All grade appeals should follow the line of communication provided in this handbook.

**Withdrawal Grades**

Withdrawal from a course within the first four weeks after registration will result in the deletion of the course from the academic record. After the fourth week and through the end of the tenth week of classes, the grade of “W” may be awarded to students earning a passing grade at the time of the official withdrawal. If a student is not earning a passing grade at the time of the withdrawal, the grade of “E” will be awarded. Requests for complete withdrawal from the University are initiated through the Registrar’s Office. Students leaving the University without a statement of formal withdrawal will be awarded a failing grade in each course.

Students should review the current term’s **Registration Dates & Deadlines Calendar** when considering a withdrawal. Summer courses are often dynamically dated, with non-standard start and end dates – please see the Registrar’s calendars for Dates and Deadlines for Classes with Non-Standard Start Dates to verify the appropriate term deadlines.

**Grades of Incomplete**

The grade of "I" for "Incomplete" may be awarded only at the end of the semester when all but a minor portion of the course work has been satisfactorily completed. Students who are failing the course may not receive an “I”. PhD students should discuss with the instructor whether or not their circumstances allow them to receive an Incomplete grade. This should be done at least two weeks before the end of the semester. Instructors should work with the student to document what course work must be completed by the student for the “I” grade to be removed and replaced with a grade. Documentation should include:

- Which assignments or exams should be completed and when
- How this work will be graded
- How the student’s course grade will be calculated
- Date all incomplete requirements must be met

The instructor may use the University’s **Report of Incomplete Grade** form to document the agreement. Both the instructor and student sign this agreement and forward the agreement to the OSSCE.

PhD students have a maximum of one calendar year to remove an Incomplete. An Incomplete not removed within one year is replaced by a failing grade of "E" and counted as an "E" in determining the student’s grade-point average. If the coursework cannot be completed within one year, the student may petition to extend the Incomplete. This petition
must be submitted before the grade converts to an “E”. A Leave of Absence does not extend the one calendar year time frame for Incomplete replacement.

If there is a possibility that the student's cumulative grade-point average will fall below 3.00 through the conversion of Incomplete grades to failing grades, the PhD degree will not be awarded.

**Leave of Absence**

Students may request a Leave of Absence (LOA) from the College of Nursing and the Graduate College. Requests may be considered for the following types of leaves:

- **Academic Leaves:** Academic LOA (i.e., leaves to take coursework at another university, for research, field work, internships, professional development, etc.) are handled on a case-by-case basis by the College of Nursing and the Graduate College.

- **Medical Leaves:** With appropriate documentation from their medical provider, graduate students in degree programs may be granted a Medical Leave of Absence by the Dean of the Graduate College. Under extraordinary circumstances, a LOA may be granted retroactively for up to one year. Students will be readmitted without reapplying to the College of Nursing and the Graduate College. Only when the LOA is approved prior to the beginning of the semester for which the LOA is being sought will students be exempted from fees for that semester. Only academic services or facilities available to the general public can be used during the LOA.

- **Personal Leaves:** Graduate students in degree programs may be granted a LOA for a maximum of one year throughout the course of their degree program by the Dean of the Graduate College. A LOA may be granted retroactively for up to one year. A LOA is granted on a case-by-case basis for compelling reasons including birth or adoption of a child, personal or family reasons, medical reasons, military duty, or financial hardship. Students will be readmitted without reapplying to the College of Nursing and the Graduate College at the expiration of the LOA. Only when the LOA is approved prior to the beginning of the semester for which the LOA is being sought will students be exempted from fees for that semester. Only academic services or facilities available to the general public can be used during the LOA.

LOAs may affect the status of a PhD student’s financial aid. Students are responsible for determining the requirements of their funding agency and/or academic unit prior to applying for a LOA.

Failure to obtain a Leave of Absence or remain in continuous enrollment will result in penalties, as described in the Graduate College’s [Continuous Enrollment](#) policy requirements.

The process for requesting a LOA from the College of Nursing is as follows:

- The student should first discuss their intent with their faculty advisor and propose an updated Plan of Study to complete their coursework.
- If the faculty advisor supports the request, the student should submit the request to the Graduate College. The online submission form is in [GradPath](#) under Petitions.
- Denial or Approval of the request will be sent to the student’s UA email.
- Student must inform OSSCE of the outcome.

**Continuous Enrollment Policy / Minimum Enrollment**

All students must complete a Plan of Study as developed with the faculty advisor. If the student wishes to change the Plan of Study in a way that will impact the timeline to complete their coursework, the student must consult with the faculty advisor and identify a new timeline for completion.

PhD students must maintain [Continuous Enrollment](#) as defined by the Graduate College’s policy. The policy requires that the student must register for a minimum of 3 graduate units each fall and spring term until the completion of all course requirements, comprehensive examinations and the completion of 18 units of Dissertation. When the above requirements are met, doctoral students not on financial assistance and/or needing to maintain appropriate visa status
must register for a minimum of 1 unit each semester until final copies of the Dissertation are submitted to the Graduate College.

While PhD students are not required to maintain Full-Time Graduate Student Status, student financial aid may require full-time status. PhD students receiving funding such as assistantships, fellowships, loans, grants, scholarships or traineeships may be required by their funding source to register for more than 1 unit to meet full-time status requirements, and should check with their program advisor regarding such requirements to ensure that they remain qualified for funding.

PhD students who have completed all coursework, comprehensive exams and completed 18 units of NURS 920 may apply for Advanced Status with the university. Advanced Status allows the PhD student to be considered a full-time enrollee at 1 unit. Interested students must review the policy in the catalog and complete the required form.

If PhD students will be working with faculty during the summer term and using university facilities or resources, the student must register for a minimum of 1 unit and obtain approval from the faculty who will be advising the student. The student and advisor should discuss the number of units required for registration, relative to the activity. Students must be registered for a minimum of 1 unit if they are defending the dissertation during a summer session. All students must confirm that their chair/advisor is available to work over the summer.

A PhD student is eligible to enroll in GRAD 922 if they have completed all 18 required units of NURS 920 and are defending the final Dissertation during the summer term. PhD students may not use GRAD 922 if they intend to continue work toward the dissertation or schedule a defense in the following academic year.

Non-Enrollment & Readmission to the College of Nursing PhD Program
Students who have been granted an approved LOA, and who return within the approved time period, do not have to apply for readmission.

Students who were previously enrolled in the PhD program who have not been officially enrolled for one regular semester or more must re-apply for admission. Readmission requires approval by the PhD Committee and the PhD Program Director. Only students considered in good academic standing according to university policy will be reviewed for readmission. The student must also reapply for admission to the Graduate College.

Students who do not enroll before the 5th week of courses for each fall and spring term may be withdrawn from the University’s systems because of non-enrollment. OSSCE will attempt to contact any student not on an approved LOA who does not enroll for the next term via email during the first 5 weeks of the term via email.

Students who do not respond to email contact will be sent a formal letter to their address of record in UAccess. If no response is received, the student may be dismissed from the program.

Timelines for Satisfactory Progression & Degree Completion
The College of Nursing enforces the Graduate College’s Time Limitation Policy. All requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) must be completed within 5 years of passing the Comprehensive Exam. Students not finishing within that time period may be allowed to re-take the Comprehensive Exam with permission of the College of Nursing, and then proceed to complete other requirements, e.g., the dissertation.

Satisfactory progression in the doctoral program is expected of all students. Students will be reviewed annually and assessed for satisfactory progression. Benchmarks have been developed to assist faculty and students to determine satisfactory progression. Failure to meet these benchmarks may trigger a review by the PhD Committee. Failure to progress satisfactory may result in dismissal from the program.
Completion of coursework per the Plan of Study: Students are expected to maintain enrollment and to complete their plans of study as outlined. All students must complete the Plan of Study as developed with the faculty advisor. If the student wishes to change the Plan of Study in a way that will impact the timeline to complete their coursework, the student must consult with the faculty advisor and identify a new timeline for completion. Students must also update their Plan of Study in Gradpath. Below are suggested expectations for a timeline for progression from comprehensive examinations to final dissertation defense.

- **Timeline for coursework to comprehensive exams**: Students are expected to successfully complete their comprehensive exams within one (1) calendar year following completion of coursework.
- **Timeline for comprehensive exams to dissertation proposal**: Students are expected to successfully defend their proposal within one (1) calendar year following completion of comprehensive exams.
- **Timeline for dissertation proposal to Instructional Review Board (IRB) process**: Students are expected to submit for IRB approval for their dissertation within six months following their proposal defense, which includes committee approval.
- **Timeline for dissertation (final) defense**: Students are expected to successfully defend their dissertation within two years following their proposal defense.

**Doctoral Residency Requirement**

To meet the minimum Graduate College Credit Requirements, students must complete a minimum of 36 units of graduate coursework in the major subject, 9 units in the minor subject (more if required by non-nursing discipline) and 18 units of dissertation.

**Appeal of Decision of Unsatisfactory Progress**

In accordance with College of Nursing policy, the student has a right to initiate a written appeal to the PhD Committee for the unsatisfactory progress decision during the 5-week period following written notification of disqualification from the program. The second and final level of appeal is to the College of Nursing Dean / Dean’s designee. Graduate students may review the resources available to them from the Graduate College related to grievances as well.
PhD Program Requirements

Plan of Study
All PhD students need to complete and submit a doctoral Plan of Study to the Graduate College by the end of the second semester of coursework. The Plan of Study includes any applicable transfer work from other institutions, intended University of Arizona Coursework and expected graduation term. The full summary of the Plan of Study is available from the Graduate College.

The Plan of Study is completed using GradPath, and requires the approval of the student’s faculty advisor and the PhD Program Director before being routed to the Graduate College.

Transfer of Graduate Courses from Other Institutions
PhD students may transfer credits from previous graduate programs for use toward the PhD degree. Students entering the PhD program with previous graduate degrees may be eligible to transfer up to 9 credits.

Prior to requesting the transfer of credits into the program, the student must review the policies in the student handbook regarding the maximum number of transferrable units. PhD students have two options for using prior coursework toward the PhD degree:

• **Substitutions**: courses from previous programs used to replace a CON course
• **Transfers**: courses from previous programs or other institutions used toward the substantive or minor areas of study

Substitution requests are processed after accepting an offer of admission to the PhD program, usually prior to RISE in August. The student must fill out either the Substitution or Transfer Evaluation Worksheet and provide the required course syllabi documentation. All documents must be received via email as PDF documents, or they will not be reviewed.

In order to be eligible for transfer or substitution, coursework must:

• Be less than 5 years old at the time of transfer
• Be graduate-level coursework
• Be available on the student’s official transcript with a grade of “A” or “B” (grades of “P” or “S” are not accepted by the Graduate College for transfer)

The process for transfer or substitution requests has two phases; the internal College of Nursing Evaluation & evaluation by the Graduate College.

The College of Nursing process is as follows:
1) Student indicates a desire to have courses evaluated for transfer/substitution to OSSCE. OSSCE assists the student in collecting the relevant documents (syllabi + transcripts) and filing out the required form. OSSCE will also assist the student in identifying the correct faculty member(s) to complete the evaluation.
2) OSSCE will send the course chair the syllabi to review for possible transfer.
3) After obtaining the course chair’s approval, the student makes any edits requested to the Course Transfer/Substitution Evaluation Worksheet, then submits to faculty advisor for a signature along with the approval email from the course chair
4) The faculty advisor signs the Course Transfer/Substitution Evaluation Worksheet.
5) The student forwards the completed worksheet to OSSCE at advanced@nursing.arizona.edu attaching PDF copies of full syllabi for all listed course(s).
6) OSSCE saves a copy of the worksheet and syllabi to the student’s folder.

The Graduate College process is as follows:
7) Once the College of Nursing’s process is complete, OSSCE includes instructions, for student, on completing the Transfer Credit Form in GradPath.
8) The Graduate College will make the final determination on whether the credit is appropriate for transfer to the university. After this evaluation, any approved units may be used toward the Plan of Study.

Transfer/Waiver Decision Appeals
There is not an opportunity to appeal transfer or substitution decisions. All decisions are final. If a student is not approved for 9 units of transfer coursework, he/she may submit additional courses for evaluation by following the above procedure.

PhD Portfolio
PhD students must maintain and complete a digital portfolio. PhD portfolios are housed in the online course system, Desire 2 Learn (D2L). Each student will see their portfolio as a course in D2L. Students in the doctoral programs must complete their portfolio annually. Faculty will use this portfolio to determine adequate progression toward degree completion. The PhD Portfolio is considered complete for graduation when the final approved copy of the dissertation is uploaded.

PhD Portfolio components
- Individual Development Plan (updated annually; due August 1; format can be found on the PhD Resources Page)
- Plan of Study working form (updated annually; due August 1; format can be on the PhD Resources Page)
- Writing exemplar (updated annually; due August 1)
- CV (updated annually; due August 1)
- 796A Synthesis Paper (due when submitted to the course)
- Comprehensive Exam Papers (due when submitted to OSSCE)
- Dissertation Proposal (final approved copy) (due after dissertation proposal defense)
- Dissertation (final approved copy) (due prior to graduation)

Transferring Between Doctoral Programs within the College of Nursing
Students wishing to transfer from one doctoral program to another (PhD to DNP or DNP to PhD) must be in good academic standing in their current doctoral program. Students should first meet with their current faculty advisor to discuss the transfer. There are two steps to this process; the College of Nursing internal process, and the Graduate College process & policies.

To initiate the College of Nursing process, the following documentation must be provided to the appropriate program committee for review:
1) The student provides a letter requesting the change that contains:
   a) Requested option
   b) Rationale for changing options:
   c) What the student plans to do after obtaining their doctoral degree
   d) Anticipated area of research or DNP practice
   e) Question to be answered by dissertation research or DNP Project
2) The student’s current advisor provides a letter of support.
3) The student identifies a potential mentor in the “receiving” option who provides a second letter of support, indicating their willingness to mentor the student.
4) Students must submit requests for transfer no later than one month prior to the end of the semester.
5) The PhD or DNP committee will review the request at their next scheduled meeting and notify the student and advisor of their decision. The student should then notify OSSCE of the change and schedule a meeting with their advisory committee to discuss any changes in the Plan of Study.

After committee approval, the student will work with OSSCE to follow the Graduate College process for switching programs.
Dual Degrees (PhD-DNP) Option
The College of Nursing offers a unique opportunity for a student to concurrently pursue the DNP & PhD degrees. Students interested in this option must review the Dual Degrees Policy, found on the Student Resources page of the website. Students must also meet with their faculty advisor to discuss their interest in seeking dual degrees.

University of Arizona BSN Honors Students Direct Admission to Doctoral Programs (PhD and/or DNP)
BSN students graduating with nursing as an Honors College graduate from the University of Arizona (satisfying all Honors College graduation requirements) are guaranteed admission to the University of Arizona’s College of Nursing doctoral programs (PhD, DNP, or Dual) under the following conditions:
- Earn a BSN with Honors (satisfying all College of Nursing and Honors College graduation requirements)
- Must complete all NURS coursework with a minimum GPA of 3.0
- Must meet all admission requirements of the DNP or PhD program. DNP applicants must also meet all established post-admission enrollment requirements (e.g. AZ Department of Public Safety Fingerprint Clearance, unencumbered RN license, immunizations)
- Must meet all University of Arizona Graduate College admission requirements
- Submit a complete College of Nursing PhD or DNP Application by the published application deadline date for the term of enrollment in the doctoral program within two years following BSN graduation (two-year time frame starts at the date of degree conferral and is measured by the date of application

PhD Benchmarks

Committees
There are three types of committees that are vitally important to PhD students: major comprehensive exam committee, minor committee, and dissertation committee. Students can change committee members at any time. The advisory committee that assists with program planning is often the committee that conducts the written and oral portions of the comprehensive examination. Students have the right to alter their committee as their scholarly interests or needs indicate. Faculty also has the right to remove themselves from a student’s committee, for reasons of retirement, sabbatical, qualification, or match with the student’s scholarly interests.

Major/Comprehensive Exam Advisory Committee
The Major/Comprehensive Exam Committee is formed at the end of the first year of coursework. The committee will meet in person for the first time during RISE 2. The purpose of this Committee is to guide the student through the coursework in the Plan of Study and to supervise the Written and Oral Comprehensive Examinations.

For the written comprehensive exam, the College of Nursing requires a minimum of 4 committee members if the student’s minor is also in nursing. A student with a non-nursing minor will also have a committee of 4 members: 3 members from nursing, and 1 from the outside discipline.

For the oral comprehensive exam, the Graduate College and the College of Nursing require a minimum of 4 committee members. The makeup of the committee must conform to the Graduate College’s specifications, including:

- The Major Advisor (chairperson who is CON tenured or tenure track faculty) and two additional members must be University of Arizona tenured, tenure-eligible or tenure equivalent faculty. The fourth member may be tenured, tenure-eligible or an approved special member.

Procedures for special member approval are below. The full Graduate College Comprehensive Examination Committee Policy is available online.
Minor Committee

Every University of Arizona PhD student must have a minor. The number of units required for a minor varies and is determined by the minor department. Minimum units are 9 and maximum are 18. For PhD students majoring in nursing, the nursing minor consists of 9 units, at least 3 of which must be nursing courses or courses approved by the PhD program director. The use of transfer credits for a nursing minor must be approved by the advisor and PhD program chair. (See section on “Transfer of Graduate Courses from Other Institutions.”) College of Nursing students with a minor in nursing do not need a separate minor committee but they do select a minor chair.

Nursing PhD students may also select established minors in other University of Arizona programs and departments. Students must meet the criteria for those minors and take the required courses for that minor.

For PhD students from other departments, the nursing minor consists of 9 units taken in the College of Nursing. PhD students from other departments select a minor chair in nursing who approves their minor plan of study and supervises their minor comprehensive exam. For non-nursing minors, the minor committee consists of one or 2 members from the minor department. These committee members help the student plan their minor plan of study and ultimately approve that portion of the graduate study plan. Minor committee members are selected based on mutual interests and research expertise and getting to know the minor department members often takes time. Most minor departments have a minor student advisor who makes initial suggestions about course selection and potential committee members. Choosing the minor committee members should be done within the first year after consultation with one’s academic advisor.

Dissertation Committee

Students will form a dissertation committee by the time of Advancement to Candidacy. The Graduate College requires a minimum of three members, all of whom must be University of Arizona tenured, tenure-track or approved as equivalent. Students may choose to include additional members, who may be special members, or additional University of Arizona faculty. All members are expected to attend the final defense. PhD-DNP dual degree students must have a DNP faculty on their dissertation committee.

Dissertation Committee Chair

Criteria for serving as chair of a PhD dissertation committee include current appointment as a College of Nursing faculty, approval by the Graduate College as eligible to serve on dissertation committees, an earned research doctorate (PhD), and prior membership on at least one completed dissertation committee.

Special Members

Special members are either non-University of Arizona professionals or current University of Arizona employees who do not hold an active tenure-track faculty position whose knowledge, skills or experience may compliment the other members of the student’s comprehensive exam or dissertation committee. Special members must be educated at a doctoral level and have applicable skills and knowledge to apply to the student’s work. Special members may be faculty at other institutions, employed by other government entities or the private sector. The special member is expected to participate in the final defense of the dissertation.

The process for seeking Special Member approval is as follows:

- Student will obtain a copy of the individual’s current Curriculum Vitae (CV) to review with the chair
- The chair reviews the special member’s CV with the PhD Program Director.
- If the PhD Program Director approves of the special member request, the Program Director will forward the individual’s CV and approval to OSSCE (advanced@nursing.arizona.edu).
- OSSCE will submit the CV and Special Member Request to the Graduate College for final approval.

If approved, the Graduate College will send an email to OSSCE with the decision and notification that the special member will be made available for use on relevant GradPath forms.
PhD Comprehensive Examination

Before advancement to degree candidacy, the student must pass a general examination in the chosen fields of study. This examination is intended to test the student’s comprehensive knowledge of the major and minor subjects of study, both in breadth across the general field of study, and in depth within the area of specialization. Students must have completed all required courses (core, substantive, role, methods, minor) prior to taking the comprehensive examination. Rare exceptions to this policy require prior program director approval.

The examination is composed of two parts, written and oral. The student must be registered during the term in which they take their comprehensive exams. After completion of NURS 796A, students should review the Comprehensive Exam Guidelines & Checklist, available on the PhD Resources Page.

Advancement to Candidacy

When the student has an approved doctoral Plan of Study on file with the Graduate College, has satisfied all course work, and passed the written and oral portions of the Comprehensive Examination, they will be “advanced to candidacy” by the Graduate College. The student’s bursar account will be billed the Graduate College’s fee for candidacy, dissertation processing, and archiving. This is a one-time fee and the student will not be billed again if they change their anticipated graduation date. Copyrighting is optional and carries an additional fee.

Once advanced to doctoral candidacy, students may use the term “PhD Candidate” for professional posters and slides. PhD students should not use the “PhDc” initials on any communication while in the program.

Dissertation Committee Appointment

When the student has an approved doctoral Plan of Study on file, has satisfied all course work, language, and residence requirements, and passed the written and oral portions of the Comprehensive Examination, he or she must file a Committee Appointment form in GradPath. This form reports the student’s planned dissertation committee, dissertation title (subject to change) and the expected graduation term (may be updated as necessary). This form must be submitted in GradPath prior to the Defense of the Dissertation Proposal. Under normal circumstances, submission is expected at least six months before the Final Oral Examination (Final Dissertation Defense).

PhD Dissertation

After advancement to candidacy, PhD (and dual DNP/PhD) students must complete the dissertation to graduate from the program.

Dissertation Proposal

The PhD Dissertation Proposal consists of Chapters 1 (Introduction), 2 (Review of the Literature) and 3 (Methods), including front matter, references, tables and figures, and pertinent appendices. Although the chairperson provides consistent mentorship throughout the proposal, the student may request guidance from other committee members during the proposal writing process. When the dissertation chairperson has approved the student’s draft of the proposal the student will contact all major committee members to set a date for the proposal defense meeting. The student is to provide committee members with copies of the proposal at least 2 weeks before the scheduled proposal defense meeting. Minor committee members may be invited to attend, but their attendance is not required. The proposal must be submitted within two academic semesters following the completion of the written and oral comprehensive exams. The student must have an approved Doctoral Dissertation Committee Appointment Form on file in GradPath prior to the meeting.

The committee chair (or one other member of the student’s committee), at minimum, must be in physical attendance if the student is present in the College of Nursing for this milestone.

Following approval of the dissertation proposal, the chair will complete the Dissertation Proposal Defense Form. The chair will confirm that the student has uploaded the final approved copy of the proposal to the D2L portfolio before
obtaining the approval of the PhD Program Director. The final copy of this form will be forwarded to OSSCE (advanced@nursing.arizona.edu) for inclusion with the student’s official academic record and in the PhD database. Receipt of this form will allow the updating of the student’s Prospectus milestone in GradPath.

Completion of Research and Written Dissertation
Research continues after major committee members approve the written dissertation. The student must be registered for NURS 920 units during this process. If the student’s Chair is available, the student may continue coursework during the summer term.

The student should use the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.) as a format guide in writing the dissertation. Exceptions to APA formatting are the manuscripts written for the three-manuscript dissertation option. Other resources include the University of Arizona’s Manual for Electronic Submission of Thesis and Dissertations.

Students have the option of completing either a traditional five-chapter dissertation or the three-manuscript option. Students should consult with their chair prior to starting either option or review the formatting templates on the website.

The formatting templates for the traditional 5-chapter dissertation option and the three-manuscript dissertation option are on the CON Website in the Student Resources – Dissertation area. The guidelines for the three-manuscript dissertation option are on the CON Website in the Student Resources – Dissertation area. All dissertations must also meet Graduate College formatting requirements.

Students in the PhD-DNP dual degree option do not write a DNP project; therefore, their dissertation research must align with their DNP specialty area.

Human Subjects & IRB Compliance
Following approval of the dissertation proposal, all students must obtain approval for the proposed study through the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program. There are no exceptions to this policy. The proposed study must be reviewed and approved by the College of Nursing Departmental Review Committee before submission to the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program. Students may not submit for review until the proposal is approved by the student’s faculty committee. Information regarding the Human Subjects process can be found via the Office of Research & Scholarship. Students may not commence any study-related activities (recruit, enroll, etc.) until approval is received. External approval may be required and must be accomplished in addition to standard university policies.

Dissertation Enrollment Policies
PhD students must enroll for a total of 18 units of Dissertation (NURS 920) over the course of their program. If 18 units have been taken and the dissertation is not yet completed, students must register for additional units of NURS 920 each fall, spring, and possibly summer semesters, as determined by the student and the advisor, until the dissertation is complete.

Students completing dissertation work should review the Continuous Enrollment Policies of the Graduate College and the University of Arizona. Students receiving funding such as assistantships, fellowships, loans, grants, scholarships or traineeships may be required by their funding source to register for more than 1 unit to meet full-time status requirements, and should check with their funding source regarding such requirements to ensure that they remain qualified for funding.

Final Oral Defense
Each student is required to present the Dissertation in an open forum upon completion. The Final Oral Defense consists of a public presentation of the project, questions from attendees in a forum, and a closed session for the student and committee. The public presentation should last no longer than 30 minutes. The closed session follows the presentation
question and answer portion. The closed session allows the committee to discuss the project with the student, and to identify any required revisions prior to submission. The committee chair (or one other member of the student’s committee), at minimum, must be in attendance if the student is present in the College of Nursing for this milestone. If all members of the committee are remote, the chair is responsible for identifying another member of the faculty who will attend the presentation in person and host the traditional post-defense toast for the student in the College of Nursing courtyard.

**Scheduling the Final Oral Defense**

The student should coordinate a time and date for the presentation with their committee as all members must be present at the final dissertation defense. Students must adhere to the “Intent to Defend” deadline provided by the OSSCE each term. Additionally, students may not defend after the date established by OSSCE. This date is set by OSSCE to ensure that students are also able to adhere to the Graduate College’s deadline for final submission.

The process for scheduling the Final Oral Defense is as follows:

- OSSCE sends a request for “Intent to Defend” each week during the first four weeks of a given term. Students who anticipate completing the dissertation must fill out the Google Form per the instructions in the email. An entry on the Google Form must be logged by the established deadlines.
- Students who indicate an Intent to Defend will be contacted to provide a date/time of their defense. This date must be established no later than the mid-semester mark of the term. Students may always cancel if they do not meet committee timelines.

GradPath forms must be completed no later than 2 weeks (10 business days) prior to the defense date.

Once GradPath forms are completed, the student’s defense information will be posted to the college’s events calendar. By Graduate College policy, each presentation must be viewable to the public. PhD students meet this rule either by presenting in person at the College of Nursing, or by sharing Zoom or other online meeting information with OSSCE. If the student is remote, a room will still be reserved for the student’s committee and any interested members of the public.

Prior to the Dissertation Defense, students must ensure that all GradPath forms are completed up to, and including, the Announcement of Final Oral Defense (NURSPHD) Form. Approval of this form will allow the chair to record the result of the defense. GradPath tutorials are available from the Graduate College. Students may log back into GradPath to check the approval status of forms at any time. The routing path is available at the bottom of each form. It is important to note that the title of the dissertation entered in GradPath is considered the official and final title and may not be changed after the defense. The title entered in GradPath will be used for printing in the official university commencement program.

**Required Materials**

The student should provide the committee members with copies of the penultimate draft of the dissertation not less than 3 weeks prior to the scheduled date of the defense. The penultimate draft of a dissertation must include:

- Front matter of the dissertation: title page, table of contents, abstract,
- Chapters 1 – 5 (or format for “three-manuscript option”), references, appendices
- Narrative completely typed
- Tables and illustrations typed or ready for professional drafting
- A copy of the Human Subjects Committee Approval form
- Tables and Figures
- Appendices
Results of the Final Oral Defense
The defense is conducted according to the Graduate College’s policies, with the Dissertation Chair presiding. There is no minimum time limit for the Final Oral Examination, but the entire proceedings may not exceed three hours. Members of the committee must be present for the entire examination.

There are four possible outcomes of the examination:

- Pass
- Pass with minor dissertation revisions (only the chairperson needs to approve the dissertation following revisions)
- Pass with major dissertation revisions (the entire committee needs to approve the dissertation following revisions)
- Fail

The Dissertation Chair will record the results of the exam in GradPath on behalf of the committee.

All students have revisions to make after the final defense. To plan for these, students should allow a few weeks between defense and final submission deadlines when scheduling a date.

Post-Defense Celebration
Students who present in-person at the College of Nursing are celebrated with a sparkling water toast after successfully passing this milestone. OSSCE provides sparkling water for the student, committee, and any special guests the student has invited (friends, family, etc.). Weather permitting, OSSCE coordinates taking pictures of the student & committee. Each student is also presented with a certificate signed by their chair indicating their order of graduation (e.g., student 102) from the PhD program. The student will ring the college’s memorial bell.

Completion Requirements for the PhD
In order to award the degree of PhD, students must complete both College of Nursing and Graduate College protocols. These details are outlined below.

Graduate College Submission Requirements
Upon submission of the PhD Dissertation Committee Form, the student will receive the Checklist for Finishing Your Doctoral Requirements from the Graduate College via email. All steps in the checklist must be completed by the posted deadlines in order for the Graduate College to confer the degree. Students should contact OSSCE or the Graduate College for questions about this process. A comprehensive list of degree requirements from the Graduate College is also available.

College of Nursing Requirements
Students also must complete the PhD program exit survey, an online survey at the time of their final oral defense. They will receive this link from OSSCE.