

Nursing PhD

Candidacy Examination

The purpose of the Candidacy Examination is to evaluate the doctoral student's ability to analyze and synthesize knowledge of his/her selected specialty focus area, which includes theory, state of the science, and appropriate research methodology.

The Candidacy Examination will be conducted no earlier than after mid-term of the last semester of course work. Students must plan ahead in order to initiate and complete the Candidacy Examination process in a timely manner. The candidacy examination process must be completed within one year of completion of course work for the student to be considered in good standing.

The Dissertation Chair is responsible for determining whether or not the student has met the course requirements for taking the examination, and has mastered the knowledge of her/his specialty focus area.

The Dissertation Chair, approved graduate faculty, graduate faculty scholars, and the approved external member constitute the Candidacy Examination Committee. If the examining committee is available during the Summer semester, the Candidacy Examination may be taken at that time.

The student must submit the Candidacy Examination Intent form to the College of Nursing, Office of Graduate Student Services. The completed form will be filed in the student's folder. If the student is not ready to take the Candidacy Examination during the final semester of course work, and/or if the Candidacy Examination is undertaken during a particular semester, the student must register for NGR 7919 Doctoral Research. The student must enroll in Doctoral Research (NGR 7919) until the Candidacy Exam has been passed. Once the exam has been passed, the student must enroll in Dissertation (NGR 7980) in the following semester.

Admission to Candidacy and Examinations

The process for candidacy will start with the appointment of the full dissertation advisory committee including the external member. The Candidacy Examination has both written and oral components. When these are completed successfully, the student becomes a doctoral candidate and is eligible to enroll in dissertation credits. When candidacy status is obtained, the student must enroll in at least three semester credits of dissertation credit each semester until successful oral defense of the dissertation is made and all graduation requirements are completed. The university requires a minimum of 15 dissertation credits. Post-candidacy status is subject to the rules and regulations of the University of Central Florida Graduate Catalog.

The following are required to enroll in dissertation hours. Evidence that items have been completed must be received by the UCF Graduate College on the Friday before the first day of classes for those who wish to enroll in dissertation hours in that semester:

- Completion of all course work, except for dissertation hours.
- Successful completion of the candidacy examination.
- The dissertation advisory committee is formed, consisting of approved graduate faculty, graduate faculty scholars, and the approved external member.
- Submittal of an approved program of study (should be finalized by the student's third semester).

The Process

1. The Dissertation Chair will determine readiness for the student to sit for the Candidacy Exam.
2. Steps of Candidacy Exam Development:
 - The Candidacy Examination Committee will confer prior to the scheduled start date established by the student/committee to prepare the examination questions.
 - The Chair of the committee is responsible for sending the standardized questions electronically to the student by 12:00 noon on the designated start date.
 - The Chair notifies the Office of Graduate Affairs of the projected dates for submission of written portion of examination and the timing of the oral portion of the examination.
 - The student will have 2 weeks to do the written component of the Candidacy Exam, during which time she/he has open access to books, articles, websites, and other resources. The paper format can be numbered (e.g., NLM) or non-numbered (e.g., APA) style.
 - The standard PhD Candidacy Question Format will be used for all candidacy examinations.
 - Focused topic insert is not to be revealed until questions are sent to student.
 - Student must provide electronic and/or paper copies of their answers to the Office of Graduate Affairs as well as the members of the exam committee two weeks after receiving the exam questions.
 - No specific discussion or feedback on written answers can occur between student and members of the committee until the oral exam.
3. It is the committee's decision as to whether the student passes or needs to re-take the entire exam, re-take a specific question(s), or respond to a new question.
4. The candidacy exam rubric form will be completed by all committee members at time of oral portion of the exam.

The Candidacy Examination has two components: written and oral.

Written: There will be 3 questions tailored to the student's area or interest, plan of study, and specialty focus area.

Standard PhD Candidacy Question Format

1. Generate an Integrative Literature Review with respect to [committee to insert focused topic here]. (10-12 pages)
 - a. Synthesize what is clearly known in the literature regarding the phenomenon
 - b. Analyze any contradictory findings or gaps in the literature.
 - c. Explain the practice and policy implications, given what is known and the gaps you identify.

2. Identify a theoretical framework relevant for studying [committee to insert focused topic here]. (6-10 pages; diagrams are considered part of the 6-10 pages)
 - a. Analyze the concepts in this framework, and their interrelationships
 - b. Argue for the applicability of this framework to this particular phenomenon. Why is this framework such a good fit?
 - c. Generate one research question or hypothesis related to this framework
 - d. Explain opposing views to applying this theoretical framework to this phenomenon.

3. Design both a qualitative and quantitative approach to studying [committee to insert focused topic here]. If applicable, summarize what needs to be incorporated in the methods to ensure that populations impacted by health disparities will be appropriately addressed and represented in the evaluation plan? (8-10 pages)
 - a. Include in your discussion of the qualitative approach:
 - i. Type of approach
 - ii. Target population
 - iii. Criteria for evaluating goodness of fit, truthfulness, or rigor
 - iv. Outline the limitations for the proposed approach(es)

 - b. Include in your discussion of the quantitative approach:
 - i. Type of design
 - ii. Target population
 - iii. Relevant threats to internal validity and how these will be addressed
 - iv. Any measurement challenges you anticipate
 - v. An argument for or against external validity being an issue for your study.
 - vi. Outline the limitations for the proposed approach(es).

Oral: The purpose of the oral component is to discuss the student's written component for clarification and extension of the student's response as warranted by the Candidacy Examination Committee. The oral component must:

- Be conducted in person at the UCF Orlando Campus or via approved teleconferencing method
- Not exceed 2 hours in length
- Fall within a 2 to 6 week period after the written component is completed

Criteria for Grading the Candidacy Examination

- Synthesizes knowledge in specialty focus area.
- Integrates specialty focus area within the broader context of nursing knowledge.
- Integrates doctoral program objectives into discussion
- Selects, applies, and evaluates the tools of scientific inquiry in nursing (i.e., theory development, conceptualization, measurement, research design, and statistics).
- Cites relevant and primary sources to support responses.
- Provides answers that are complete, logical, and responsive to the specific questions asked.
- Articulates and defends ideas in both written and oral forms.

Note: Students must pass the candidacy exam and have the candidacy and dissertation advisory committee documentation received and processed by the UCF College of Graduate Studies prior to the first day of classes for the next term in order to enroll in dissertation hours for that term.

If the student unexpectedly is unable to take the Candidacy Examination on the specified dates because of illness or other emergency, the Dissertation Chair should be notified as soon as possible by the student. Health care provider verification may be required. The Chair in turn will notify the other members of the Candidacy Examination Committee and the CON Office of Graduate Student Services. Rescheduling the examination is at the discretion of the Candidacy Examination Committee.

Outcomes

The written and oral components of the Candidacy Examination are viewed as one examination with a combined outcome, either: Meets or Does Not Meet Expectations. The committee evaluates the student's examination and determines the outcome based upon the majority vote. The outcome of the Candidacy Examination and additional feedback will be conveyed verbally to the student within 1 hour after completing the oral examination. The Dissertation Chair is responsible for submitting the Candidacy Outcome Form to the College of Nursing, CON Office of CON Office of Graduate Student Services. The Dissertation Chair will submit an electronic copy of the written examination and will notify the Chair of the PhD APG Committee for reporting in the next month's meeting. The signed documents and the written component of the examination are filed in the student's official College of Nursing file.

If the outcome of the Candidacy Examination Meets Expectations, the student will:

- Check with the CON Office of Graduate Student Services to ensure candidacy/initial committee paperwork has been filed with the UCF College of Graduate Studies.
- Register for dissertation credits (NGR 7980) in the subsequent semester
- Initiate steps for conducting the Dissertation Research.

Note: Students can register for dissertation hours in the term following candidacy, but cannot begin research until the dissertation proposal is approved and the research is approved by the UCF IRB (if human participants are involved). Failure to follow these two requirements causes students to be subject to the UCF "Golden Rule" and potential expulsion from the nursing doctoral program. **In addition, students in the College of Nursing who are admitted to candidacy are not allowed to use the title PhD (c).**

If the outcome of the Candidacy Examination Does Not Meet Expectations:

- Students who do not pass, must wait 3 months before reattempting but must complete successfully within 6 months following their first attempt. Candidacy Examination Committee will decide if the student must answer two or more specific questions from the original exam, or new questions. When the end of the 6-month period falls during the Summer semester, the examination may be retaken during that semester if the Candidacy Examination Committee is available. Otherwise, the repeat examination must be conducted during the subsequent Fall semester.
- The Candidacy Examination Committee must specify in writing:
 - Specific requirements in order to retake the examination, such as additional course work, directed readings, or other relevant activities.
 - If the examining committee requires additional course work that extends beyond the 6-month retake rule, this fact must be documented and a timeframe for the retake clearly specified.
 - The component(s) to be repeated: only the written paper, only the oral component, or both components as evaluated by the Candidacy Examination Committee.
 - The written and/or oral components to be retaken will follow the same procedures delineated as for the initial Candidacy Examination.
- The student and Candidacy Examination Committee need to plan ahead for the repeat examination date(s) to insure everyone's availability.
- The student must submit documentation to the Chair of the Candidacy Examination Committee that she/he has fulfilled the specified requirements before a repeat examination is scheduled.

If the outcome of the *repeat* Candidacy Examination is Meets Expectations, the student will proceed to Candidacy as outlined above.

If the outcome of the *repeat* Candidacy Examination is Does Not Meet Expectations, the student will be dismissed from the nursing doctoral program.

Student name:
Date:
Faculty Chair:

Grading Rubric for PhD Candidacy Exam

Criteria	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
1) Synthesizes knowledge in specialty focus area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualizes knowledge within nursing and able to identify gap in knowledge for nursing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to conceptualize knowledge within nursing and identify gap. • Unable to present state of knowledge on topic
2) Integrates specialty focus area within the broader context of nursing and other relevant scientific knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains significance of topic • Conceptualizes the problem within a broader scope outside of nursing and apply appropriate theoretical frameworks. • Incorporates knowledge outside of nursing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to conceptualize problem within a broader scope and/or apply appropriate theoretical framework. • Unable to bring in knowledge outside of nursing. • Unable to identify significance of topic on a broader scope
3) Selects, applies, and evaluates scientific inquiry in nursing and other relevant scientific knowledge (i.e., measurement, research design, and statistics).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates depth of knowledge related to research methods appropriate for investigating problems in their field. • Designs research studies appropriate for their research question • Chooses and applies appropriate methods for analysis congruent to their design and research question • Chooses and applies appropriate measurement tools congruent with the concepts/variables under study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates insufficient knowledge of methods, research design, analytical methods, and/or measurement • Unable to discuss elements of rigor appropriate to the design

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses rigor appropriate to the design and research question 	
4) Provides answers that are complete, logical, and responsive to the specific questions asked.	Formulates answers in a disciplined, well-focused manner; able to clearly articulate argument and provide evidence-based rationale	Wanders off topic; loses thread of argument; does not answer questions asked.
5) Cites relevant sources to support responses	Yes	No
6) Articulates and defends ideas (written)	Yes	No
7) Articulates and defends ideas (oral)	Yes	No
Final Outcome	<p>Pass</p> <p>All criteria marked as “Satisfactory” by the committee.</p>	<p>Fail</p> <p>One or more criteria marked as “Unsatisfactory” by the committee. Rationale for student responses being unsatisfactory and a next steps plan are required.</p>
Rationale for outcome:		
Next steps:		
Signatures:		
Faculty Chair		
Committee member		
Committee member		
Committee member		

Student (acknowledges receipt of candidacy exam outcome and next steps)	
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