



UNIVERSITY *of* MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF NURSING

**PhD Program Guide
2020-2021**

August 2020

Guide Purpose

This guide provides supplemental information for the University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON) PhD students and faculty related to the important milestones in the PhD program. Other sources provide important general information for students:

UMSON Student Handbook. For details about the policies and procedures applicable to all UMSON students, the UMSON Student Handbook can be found on the SON web page under Student Life/Student Handbook. <https://www.nursing.umaryland.edu/student-life/handbook/>

The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) **Graduate School Catalog** also provides information specific to the Graduate School regulations such as required forms and the Graduate Associate Guide. This can be found at <http://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/policies/>

UMB Graduate Assistant Guide can be found at the same site <http://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/policies/>

1.0 **PhD PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The PhD program is comprised of core courses and research experiences, which build a student's "tool box". The remainder of credits are designed to build research domain expertise. The three-year and four-plus year plans of study outline the recommended sequence of courses and dissertation credits. The milestones include:

- Completion of required core courses and the majority of elective coursework (42 credits)
- Passing a comprehensive exam to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of a research area
- Advancing to candidacy (application process to Graduate School)
- Defending dissertation proposal
- Submission of at least 1 manuscript (required for all students - see Dissertation in this Guide)
- Defending dissertation

Students are responsible to meet regularly with their advisors to review their plans of study and establish timelines for these milestones. At the end of the Spring semester, students are expected to complete an End-of-Year Evaluation and discuss their progress and goals with their advisor.

2.0 **RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP TRAINING**

Having chosen a research-focused doctorate, students require in-depth exposure to research and scholarship. There are multiple opportunities to enhance your research knowledge:

1. **Grant Writing Course.** A grant writing course is now required for all students. Topics are covered that are integral to building and successfully applying for research grants. In conjunction with this class, students are required to take one credit of research practicum (NURS 818) with their advisor to support their advisor's effort in the class.

2. **Research rotations** (NURS 819). Students are required to take 2 credits of research rotation with experienced researchers. These are exposure experiences and should be taken early in the program of study. They may or may not be about the students' research interest.
3. **Research practicums** (NURS 818). Students are required to take 6 credits of research practicum. These are like independent studies and allow the student to meet their own learning objectives. A learning contract is required and should have clearly defined objectives and deliverables related to research.
4. **Independent study experiences**. Students may take independent study credits for some elective credits and to complement supplemental trainings and institutes that may not award credit. In any situation, independent studies require a learning contract with objectives, deliverables, and timelines. Before candidacy, NURS 898 (Pre-candidacy Research) should be used if the six practicum credits (NURS 818) have been exhausted. After candidacy, NURS 897 (Special Topics in Research) should be used. NURS 818 should not be used for independent studies.
5. **Presentations/Seminars/Conferences**. Students are expected to take advantage of the multiple research presentations on the UMB campus. These include "Lunch & Learn" seminars, faculty presentations, student dissertation and capstone presentations, continuing education offerings, and formal conferences on campus. The proximity to Annapolis and Washington, DC also allows for attendance at policy meetings and hearings. Students should be disseminating their work at conferences. For example, the first year may be posters at Graduate Research Day, while in subsequent years students should be identifying nursing or content-specific national conferences to attend and present posters. **All students should have at least one publication prior to graduation.**

Students are responsible for maintaining their compliance with training oversight when conducting human subjects' research. Requirements are specified and maintenance must be reported on the End-of-Year Evaluation <http://www.nursing.umaryland.edu/research/resources/regulatory-affairs/>. All PhD students are required to retake Good Clinical Practice and CITI training prior to proposal defense. If the student has an active human subjects research protocol, it must be reported in the evaluation and may be reviewed by the Research Quality Assurance Specialist. Contact with human subjects through any research experience (e.g., rotation, practicum, research assistantship) requires that training is up to date.

3.0 COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

3.1 Purpose and format

Successful completion of the comprehensive exam is a requirement of the Graduate School. The purpose of the comprehensive examination (CE) is to evaluate the student's mastery of knowledge essential for conducting scientific inquiry and knowledge of his/her selected specialty area. The PhD Curriculum Committee provides oversight for evaluating the comprehensive examination. The Associate Dean for the PhD program is responsible for approving the examining committee and monitoring the examination results, including keeping a record of exam performance. The majority of the responsibility for the exam is that of the students' comprehensive exam committee, which develops, administers, and grades the examination.

The exam has both written and oral components. The written portion of the exam may be accomplished in two ways: 1) written exam, or 2) research proposal (Proposal Option Exam (POE)). To promote the

early development of research proposals, the comprehensive exam requirements can be fulfilled when the exam committee agrees that a research proposal (e.g., National Research Service Award (NRSA), or other agency or foundation substantive proposal) meets the purpose of the exam. The student consults with their advisor as to the suitability of their proposal to meet the comprehensive exam intent. The proposal does not have to be submitted as the proposal deadlines may not be consistent with students' need to progress with their research. The POE should be selected only if the proposal is primarily the student's work, reflects the appropriate level of scholarship, and represents the comprehensiveness intended by the exam. Three members of the dissertation committee must agree that the proposal meets the intent. The proposal serves as the written portion of the exam. However, an oral exam is required for both exam types. For POE, the oral exam may include updates that have arisen, additional theoretical or statistical detail, or other content relevant to assessing students' readiness for progression.

3.2 Comprehensive Exam Process

Step 1: Student discusses readiness for exam with their advisor.

Upon completion of the required courses (NURS 802, 840, 841, 850, 851, 814, 815, 819, 818, 811, 816 and grant writing) and at least 42 credits (excluding dissertation credits), students consult with their advisor as to their readiness to take the comprehensive exam. (Exceptions to the 42-credit rule may be made with the support of the Associate Dean for the PhD program). The advisor is responsible for determining that the student has met requirements of eligibility for the examination and has attained mastery of his/her specialty area, regardless of the format.

Step 2: Student and advisor nominate exam committee and determine a timeline.

The student and advisor should complete the [Nomination of the Comprehensive Exam Committee](#) form and submit it to the Associate Dean of the PhD Program, regardless of the exam format chosen. The committee is comprised of at least three members, one of whom is the student's research advisor. The committee chair must be someone other than the student's advisor. Composition of the committee should include persons who are members of the UMB Graduate School faculty (or have equivalent credentials) with expertise in the student's specialty area, relevant theory, and research methods. A majority of the members must be UMSON faculty.

For the written exam, the time period for the exam should be determined at the time the committee is nominated. This timeline includes two weeks for students to take the written exam, two weeks for the committee to review the written exam, and a single day for the oral exam. Room reservations can be scheduled with the Office of the Academic Deans.

Step 3: Student prepares comprehensive exam statement (only for students taking the written exam).

The student prepares a comprehensive exam statement in consultation with his/her advisor. The purpose of the comprehensive examination statement is to inform the committee of the student's defined area of expertise and intended research focus. These are essential to assist the exam committee in developing targeted questions. The statement narrative should be limited to 4-5 pages, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and references (or 2-3 pages single-spaced).

Conceptual, methodological, and content aspects of the student's area of expertise should be covered in the statement. The statement should begin with a concise description of the content area. A brief description of how coursework and research experiences have contributed to the development of the content area should be provided. Papers, projects, presentations, or experiences that are relevant to

developing expertise as a scholar and researcher should be cited. For example, instruments critiqued in NURS 811 may reflect the students' understanding of psychometrics relevant to important measures in the content area. Research rotations, research practica, and electives should be discussed if they describe how content or method expertise was developed.

Step 4: Student takes the written exam over a two-week period (students taking the written exam).

The exam is sent to the student electronically at the designated exam start date and time, usually by the committee chair. If the student is unable to take the examination on the specified dates because of illness or other emergency, the chairperson should be notified as soon as possible, and the examination will be rescheduled. Students are expected to prepare responses independently, using appropriate resources. They should not consult with other students or obtain writing assistance. The final exam should not exceed 30 double-spaced typewritten pages, using 11-point font, 1-inch margins, and APA/AMA format (or 15 single-spaced pages). This limit excludes tables, figures, and references. Tables are encouraged to synthesize information, particularly when literature is summarized. The text of the exam should focus on synthesis, not the findings of individual studies. The student must submit an electronic copy of the exam to the CE Committee chair 14 days from the date the exam started.

Step 5: The committee evaluates the written exam or proposal.

The student's exam is evaluated by the committee members who may meet to discuss results as a group prior to the oral exam. Questions are prepared for the oral component of the exam, often focusing on areas that lacked clarity or depth.

Step 6: The oral examination is conducted.

Only committee members and the student are in attendance when the oral exam is conducted. It should not exceed two hours in length. For the written exam, students may be asked to clarify or expand on content in the exam. For the POE exam, students may be asked to update the committee on domain content or methods since the proposal was submitted. For all students, some part of the exam is often directed toward refining dissertation focus and methods. The evaluation criteria for the oral exam are:

1. Student demonstrates depth of knowledge of his/her specialty area.
2. Student demonstrates the ability to integrate the specialty area within the broader context of scientific knowledge.
3. Student demonstrates the ability to appropriately select, apply, and evaluate the tools of scientific inquiry (i.e., theory development, conceptualization, measurement, research design, and statistics).
4. Student demonstrates the ability to articulate and defend ideas in both written and oral formats.
5. Student cites relevant sources to support responses.
6. Student provides answers that are complete, logical, and responsive to the specific questions asked.

Step 7: The exam committee determines a grade for the exam.

The examination grade (pass, provisional pass, or fail) is determined by majority vote. The results are conveyed verbally to the student within one hour after completing the oral component of the examination. The chairperson is responsible to complete the [Notification of Results of Comprehensive Examination](#) form and submit to the Associate Dean.

In case of failure, students can repeat the exam one time. The re-examination must be taken no sooner than three months and no later than six months from the date of the initial examination. The original

exam committee will determine the form and content of the re-examination. A student may be asked to repeat all or part of the examination; this decision rests with the committee. The committee will advise the student on how to approach remediation, which may include taking a course, doing fieldwork with the population of interest, or doing additional literature review and synthesis. The examining committee evaluates the retake of the exam and the grade (pass or fail) is determined by majority vote. Students who fail the exam a second time or fail to retake the exam will be academically dismissed from the PhD program.

4.0 ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

Passing the comprehensive exam signals to the Graduate School that students are ready for candidacy. Students should submit the candidacy application at the same time as they submit the results of the comprehensive exam. The [Application for Admission to Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy](#) form, along with an unofficial transcript, should be submitted to the Associate Dean for the PhD program for signature. If courses have been taken at other schools, official transcripts should be attached so the Graduate School can update the student's UM transcripts. A student must be admitted to candidacy within four years from the first term of enrollment and at least two full sequential semesters or sessions (spring, summer, or fall) before graduation. If courses have been approved to be "shared" with another UMSON program (e.g., MS or DNP), these should also be indicated on the application to candidacy. The Associate Dean will send the candidacy application to the Dean of the Graduate School for approval. Students will receive a letter from the Graduate School acknowledging their admission and advising them of the four-year limit to complete all requirements for graduation.

5.0 DISSERTATION

The UMSON follows all Graduate School policies for the dissertation. Information about the purpose, committee membership, documentation required, and how the exam is conducted can be found on the Graduate School website. <http://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/forms/>

5.1 Responsibilities

Students are responsible for working closely with the dissertation chair and committee members throughout the dissertation process. They must keep their dissertation chair informed of circumstances that may delay progress. The chair is responsible for:

- Reviewing the proposed research for scientific quality
- Assuring appropriate protection of human subjects, including student's compliance with all reporting and training
- Recording and communicating committee action to the student and the Associate Dean for the PhD program
- Recommending changes in committee membership, subject to approval by the student, the Associate Dean for the PhD program, and (if already approved) the Dean of the Graduate School
- Making sure that students have required coursework and credits.

Once a committee is appointed, a change in topic may influence readiness for dissertation and may require a change in committee membership. The student is responsible for discussing the changes with the advisor and/or Associate Dean of the PhD program. Paperwork indicating a change in dissertation committee must be forwarded to the Associate Dean of the PhD program and the Graduate School must approve the new committee.

5.2 Dissertation Process at the SON

Step 1: Dissertation committee is nominated a minimum of six months before the proposed date of the final oral examination.

In collaboration with the advisor, the student identifies the dissertation committee composition. The committee comprises a minimum of five and a maximum of seven voting members, all of whom must hold the doctoral degree or the terminal degree in his/her discipline. The committee must include the candidate's research advisor (who is the chair) and one member who is external to the candidate's program, department, or discipline. At least three of the committee members must be regular members of the University of Maryland Graduate School faculty. The chairperson submits the [Nomination of Members for the Final Doctoral Examination Committee](#) form to the Associate Dean for the PhD program. The Associate Dean of the PhD program must approve the committee. The form is then forwarded to the dean of the Graduate School who appoints the committee, designates the Graduate School representative, and notifies the chairperson of the approval.

Step 2: Student prepares proposal.

Regardless of the dissertation format (traditional chapters or manuscript option dissertation (MOD), the student must prepare and defend a proposal that represents the dissertation research. The proposal should address the research completed and what remains to be done. If a MOD is planned, the conceptualization and methods for each of the manuscripts should be detailed. The targeted journal and journals should be described in the proposal. Note that if a manuscript is in progress or is already submitted, the committee must agree that it meets the criteria for a dissertation manuscript as described in Step 5 below.

The proposal format may vary – advisors should provide guidance on expectations. Some may use the NIH proposal format. Proposals often contain the following elements:

1. Aims page summarizing the proposed study
2. Background
 - a. Development of the problem including a complete literature review that identifies gaps
 - b. Theoretical framework that provides a rationale for the study
 - c. Assumptions, if appropriate
 - d. Aims and hypothesized relationships
 - e. Significance
3. Methods
 - a. Design
 - b. Sample (sample size/power estimates)
 - c. Measures/operational definitions
 - d. Data collection procedures
 - e. Data analysis procedures
4. Human subjects, if appropriate
5. Bibliography
6. Appendices (examples)
 - a. Literature Synthesis tables
 - b. Letters of administrative approval, data use agreements, etc.
 - c. Instruments

There may be several iterations of the proposal before it is considered defensible. The dissertation chair and student identify a proposal defense date. When the proposal is ready, it is distributed to the committee -- at least two weeks before the scheduled proposal defense. The student prepares a 30-

minute presentation of his/her proposed research, under the guidance of the dissertation chair. The presentation should include an outline of potential manuscripts and journals (if manuscript option) and a timeline for completion. Note that students must retake CITI and Good Clinical Practice training search training prior to proposal defense per SON policy.

Step 3: Student presents dissertation proposal

The student presents the proposed research to the committee. A discussion follows where the committee gains clarification and recommends modifications to the research if needed. Approval of the proposal serves as a written agreement between the student and the committee regarding the expectations, limitations, and scope of the research project. Any changes should be detailed by the advisor/chair. The [Notification of Doctoral Dissertation Committee's Approval of Research Proposal](#) must be signed by committee members and submitted to the Associate Dean for the PhD program.

Step 4: Student and committee chairperson submits to the Institutional Review Board

With the chairperson as principal investigator, the student and the chair develop the Cicero protocol for approval of human subjects. The student should meet with the Research Quality Manager in the SON Office of Research and Scholarship before beginning the Cicero application for advice and guidance. At that time, it will be determined if a regulator binder is required to track documentation of human subjects research. If research is being conducted under another institution's IRB or there are unusual circumstances, these should be discussed with the Research Quality Manager. It may be necessary to get human subjects approval from a second organization. This review may be independent of, subsequent to, or prior to obtaining administrative approval for conducting the study in that organization. Even if the research is considered not human subjects (e.g., de-identified secondary data), the IRB must be queried to make this determination.

Step 5: Dissertation is prepared in traditional format or as manuscript option dissertation (MOD)

Both the traditional dissertation format (5 chapters) or manuscript option dissertation (MOD) must conform to the Graduate School's dissertation requirements, found under the Thesis and Dissertation Style Guide at <http://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/forms/>. In consultation with their research advisor, students determine what format to use. Publications are encouraged early in the course of study, and some may be appropriate for the manuscript option dissertation. For example, a critical review of research on a topic conducted in one course may provide the basis for a manuscript. A pilot study conducted in the quantitative or qualitative methods courses may be expanded to form one study and manuscript for the dissertation. Thus, students may submit manuscripts for publication during coursework, and those same manuscripts may form parts of the dissertation.

Target journals should be selected in consultation with the research advisor and dissertation committee and must be peer-reviewed. After the advisor's review, the majority of the committee must approve each manuscript. By the time of dissertation defense, the committee should deem all three manuscripts as "publication quality", although none has to be submitted. The publications should represent research or scholarship comparable in scope and contribution to the portion of the standard dissertation that it replaces. Manuscripts, in most cases, should be first-authored by the student, with at least two of the three presenting original databased findings from the culmination of the dissertation research. However, there are some situations where second and third authorship on manuscripts may represent students' research as part of a collaborative project or foundational in methods or concept to the dissertation. In this instance, the dissertation should have statements clearly indicating the student's contribution on the manuscript.

The advisor assumes the primary role in helping the student negotiate the process of authorship. This includes: the process of selecting an audience and journal for a specific body of work; the role of coauthors; the submission, review, and publication process; and the revision and resubmission procedures. The role of the dissertation chair and committee members in research publications will follow standard authorship criteria namely, based on the substantive contribution of an individual to conceptualization, conduct, and reporting of research findings. **Co-authorship should be discussed and established early in the manuscript preparation process. It should not be assumed that all committee members are authors on all manuscripts.**

With regard to format for the MOD, chapter 1 introduces the problems studied, including a synthesized literature review that clearly identifies the knowledge gaps, linkages of study to theory, methods for each aim/paper, and a summary of the manuscripts in the dissertation. Chapters 2 through 4 will be the manuscripts. Chapter 5 represents a synthesis of findings across the three publications including the implications for practice, policy and future research. Limitations and conclusions of the overall body of work should be explicated. The MOD must comply with the Graduate School formatting.

Step 6: Dissertation is certified and the announcement is sent to the Graduate School

Two weeks before the scheduled defense, the chair and the two members who have been designated as readers must sign the [Certification of Completion of Doctoral Dissertation](#) form. The form must be received by the Graduate School at least two weeks (or a minimum of 10 working days) before the proposed examination date. At the same time, a [Doctoral Defense Announcement](#) form must be submitted (abstracted limited to 350 words for ProQuest). The Graduate School posts the announcement on their website and sends it to UMB PhD program directors.

Step 7: Dissertation exam (defense) is conducted

Prior to the start of the examination, the committee may meet in private to review the dissertation and discuss issues. If a majority of the committee agrees that the dissertation is not defensible, the examination is canceled. The committee should also agree on the procedure (e.g., length of time for the initial presentation by the candidate, whether the initial presentation may be interrupted by questions and format for committee examination). A Graduate School representative identified by the Graduate School is responsible to ensure that the procedures are followed. See Graduate Schools [Procedures for Examination of the Doctoral Dissertation](#).

In the School of Nursing, the doctoral examination normally comprises two components: an open presentation by the doctoral candidate and a formal examination by committee members. During the open presentation, the student is expected to present his/her dissertation in a seminar format. The presentation is open to the public and is moderated by the committee chair. Those attending the open presentation may ask the candidate questions within the format set by the committee. The formal doctoral examination procedures are open only to members of the candidate's committee and other members of the graduate faculty who wish to be present. All members of the committee must be present for the examination. The formal examination is moderated by the committee chair and only committee members may ask questions of the candidate. Other members of the graduate faculty who are present during the examination are not permitted, verbally or otherwise, to participate in the proceedings of the examination.

At the end of the examination, the candidate is excused and the committee deliberates in private on the acceptability of the dissertation and performance of the candidate. There are two levels of pass: the

dissertation is accepted with minor changes, or the dissertation requires significant non-trivial revisions. In the latter case, the committee sets a timeline for completion of the revisions and names the committee member(s) who will certify satisfactory completion of the revisions. The members sign the [Approval of Dissertation](#) committee report and register their votes. The affirmative votes of a majority plus one of the committee members constitutes a successful defense of the dissertation. The required number of affirmative votes is either four from a five-member committee or five from a six- or seven-member committee.

If the candidate fails to receive the required affirmative votes, the committee must, at the time of the examination, agree on the necessary action. The candidate may be failed on the acceptability of the written dissertation, on the oral presentation, or both. The committee may find that, in spite of a decision that the dissertation document was defensible, defects prevent it from being accepted. If these defects are minor in nature, the committee may vote to accept the dissertation pending remedial modifications. If the defects are more serious, the committee may decide to fail the dissertation and require a new examination. Alternatively, the dissertation document may be determined to be sound but the candidate's defense is inadequate. In this case, the committee must follow the [Procedures for Examination of the Doctoral Dissertation](#).

Step 8: Results of the examination are reported to the Associate Dean and the Graduate School

The candidate is informed of the decision as soon as possible. The *Report of the Examination Committee* is signed by all members and submitted to the Associate Dean for the PhD program, who forwards it to the Graduate School no later than two working days following the examination. In the event that the candidate fails the examination, the Graduate School representative (in collaboration with the Associate Dean) must report this in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School within two working days, giving the reasons for the failure, the decisions concerning necessary remedial action, and approximately, when a new examination will be held. The Graduate School representative (in collaboration with the Associate Dean) must return the signed report of the committee with the letter. Copies of the letter must be provided to the candidate, chair, and Associate Dean for the PhD program. The new examination must be held within one year from the date of the first examination and the necessary paperwork must be sent to the Graduate School representative. The Associate Dean for the PhD program must be informed of all decisions and arrangements regarding the outcome of the examination. The candidate may only present for the doctoral examination twice.

Step 9: Prepare and submit an electronic dissertation as instructed in the [Electronic Dissertation and Thesis Style Guide](#).

5.3 Dissertation Research Credits (NURS 899)

Dissertation credits (NURS 899) should be taken only after admission to candidacy and in the semester when the proposal will be defended. **The credits taken during a given semester should reflect the expenditure of time (students and advisors') on dissertation-related activities.** Students should work with their advisor to determine how dissertation credits should be taken and how they should be allotted to committee members. For example, in the analytic stage, students may divide four NURS 899 credits between committee members who are providing statistical support and writing support. Allocating dissertation credits to the committee members recognizes their contribution and workload. At the end of each semester, a pass/fail grade should be assigned to the NURS 899 credits, rather than leave a grade of No Mark (NM).

6.0 Teaching and Academic Experience

Many PhD students aspire to an academic position after graduation. During the PhD program, students have opportunities to develop their teaching skills. Each student should develop a personal learning plan in collaboration with their advisor. It may be desirable to meet with a faculty member in the *Institute for Educators* to develop this plan and to identify opportunities. Even experienced teachers can benefit from coursework, skill-building workshops, and seminars. Students are encouraged to attend the educational sessions presented by the Institute, which focus on topics related to teaching, online learning, testing, etc. UMB has made interprofessional education a priority and the Center for Interprofessional Education is under the direction of Dean Kirschling. Students are encouraged to participate in IPE activities. Students also can seek opportunities to teach lectures in both a face-to-face and online format by discussing needs with their advisor or the Associate Dean.

7.0 Pre-doctoral grant submission

Students are encouraged to consider submission of proposal to secure funding for their dissertation. All proposal submissions – no matter how small the amount -- are considered as research proposals submitted by the institution. Therefore, they must follow the award processes outlined by the Office of Research and Scholarship

<https://www.nursing.umaryland.edu/research/resources/preaward/preawardres/> .

The pre-award form must be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the sponsor's deadline. Only the Dean can grant exceptions to this requirement.

Important Contact Information

General questions about PhD program procedures can be directed to the staff of the Office of the Academic Deans. Some issues require consultation with the UMB Graduate School since the PHD program is under their auspices.

University of MD School of Nursing Office of the Academic Deans

Suite 404 410-706-4359

NRSdoctoral@umaryland.edu

University of MD Graduate School

620 W. Lexington Street

410-706-3100

<http://graduate.umaryland.edu/>