

Faculty of Nursing - Doctor of Nursing (DN) Doctoral Candidacy Regulations

The University of Calgary [Doctoral Candidacy Regulations](#) (“the Regulations”) govern the conduct of admission to doctoral candidacy at the University of Calgary. This document establishes program specific requirements associated with the conduct of admission to graduate candidacy in the Doctor of Nursing (DN) Program under the *Regulations*.

This policy is in effect for students admitted into the Doctor of Nursing program January 2023 onwards.

Statement of Purpose

The DN program is focused on the scholarship of integration, in particular, but also on the scholarship of application, as identified by E.L. Boyer.¹ “The scholarship of integration emphasizes the interconnection of ideas and brings new insight to bear on original concepts and research”.² The scholarship of application on the other hand may focus on delivery of healthcare and evaluation of its impact.³ Given that the DN program is focused on developing nurse leaders and innovators for senior roles in healthcare and related organizations, these candidacy requirements are geared to prepare the student to undertake applied research (e.g., evaluation, quality improvement/quality assurance approaches).

Admission into Candidacy in the DN Program:

- 1) ensures that students have a well-developed plan for their applied research, a sound proposal with a well-developed question and potential for the ability to pursue and complete independent applied research at the doctoral level; and
- 2) requires that students have abilities to conceptualize, interpret, critique and synthesize information from a variety of sources and translate it to healthcare leadership and innovation.

Supervisory Committee Composition

Students will be assigned a supervisor within the first three months of the program. A supervisory committee will be identified within the first six months of the program. The committee membership will be identified by the supervisor, in collaboration with the student, and approved by the Associate Dean Graduate Programs and Faculty of Graduate Studies. Normally, the supervisory committee will be comprised of the Faculty supervisor, one-two other academic

¹ Scholarship Reconsidered. Priorities of the Professoriate. Special Report for The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990 <https://www.umces.edu/sites/default/files/al/pdfs/BoyerScholarshipReconsidered.pdf>; and the scholarship of engagement. Journal of Public Service and Outreach, 1996; 1(1), 11-20.

²<https://www.aacnnursing.org/newsinformation/position-statements-white-papers/defining-scholarship>

³ <https://www.aacnnursing.org/newsinformation/position-statements-white-papers/defining-scholarship>

members (depending on the need) from relevant faculties/institutions, and the workplace or related mentor (who will be included as a non-voting advisory committee member, as per Faculty of Graduate Studies guidelines). However, if the workplace or related mentor holds a doctoral degree, then that individual may serve as a committee member. The Faculty supervisor, and the supervisory committee, will work closely with the student throughout their program to frame and articulate the focus of their applied research (a 'wicked' problem); provide guidance on the project plan; support the implementation and evaluation of the project and related dissemination/KT; as well as identifying the leadership lessons learned from undertaking their work. The committee members will contribute relevant subject matter expertise and/or operational/theoretical/methodological to support for the successful development, implementation, and evaluation of the project. Committee members will also engage in the required proposal and project defense activities (e.g., both written and oral).

All students in the DN Program must successfully fulfill the following requirements (see Appendix A)

- 1) All course requirements;
- 2) Approval of a thesis proposal,
- 3) A Field of Study (FoS) examination which includes:
 - a. Written FoS examination (theory and breadth of topic (including reading list));
 - b. Oral FoS examination (theory and breadth (including reading list))

Thesis Proposal

The thesis proposal will be completed normally within 20-22 months following admission to the DN program and before undertaking the FoS exams. Building on the course work and working with the supervisory committee, the student will complete a thesis proposal. The student is expected to submit early drafts of the proposal to the supervisor first, then to the committee members for further feedback and refinement. The proposal should be presented in a scholarly format, double-spaced and be approximately 20 pages in length (excluding references, figures, and tables). The following thesis/dissertation format is a useful guideline:

- (i) Abstract;
- (ii) Statement of the problem.
- (iii) Review of literature;
- (iv) Theoretical framework, as appropriate;
- (v) Methodology followed and applied research plan;
- (vi) Timeline;
- (vii) Dissemination plan;
- (viii) References

The entire committee must be satisfied with the thesis proposal has sufficient substance to guide high quality applied research in the topic area. They will indicate their satisfaction with this

criterion by signing the *Approval of Thesis Proposal Form* sent to them, by email, by the supervisor. A copy of the form will be included with the submission to the appropriate research ethics review board (which will occur before the Field of Study Exams), should ethics approval be required.

Field of Study Examination

Format of the Written and Oral Field of Study Examinations

The Field of Study (FOS) examination tests a DN student's knowledge of a field or fields related, but not identical to, their applied research. The FOS examination encourages the student to develop both breadth and depth of knowledge within a given field or fields of enquiry. The written FOS examination, which is to be based on a Reading List, requires students to respond to one question over the period of twenty-one days. The oral FOS examination, which is also based on the same Reading List, tests a DN student's ability to respond orally to questions that extend beyond (i.e., are different from) those on the written FOS examination. It requires that the students articulate their responses in a clear and concise manner and that they evaluate the results of previous research and rely on the relevant theories, methods, and results (from the Reading List) to substantiate arguments.

Reading List

It is the responsibility of the student, in consultation with the Supervisor, to assemble a Reading List within 22 months after entry into the program. The Reading List, which should be assembled to ensure that students have both breadth and depth of knowledge in at least one, but no more than three, subject areas (including primary works, theory, methodology, and implementation, when appropriate), will normally contain approximately 30-40 entries (i.e., books, chapters in books, and journal articles). The Reading List is submitted in the final form to and unanimously approved (via email) by the members of the Supervisory Committee within two weeks of submission to the Supervisory Committee.

Composition of the FOS Examination Committee and Scheduling of the FOS Examination

The Student's Supervisory Committee, one additional member from within the program, and one member external to the Program will make up the Written and Oral FOS Examination Committee. The external member is appointed by the Associate Dean Graduate Programs, after reviewing the recommendation from the Student's Supervisor. The FOS Examination committee is to be formed by the end of the student's 20th month in the program.

The Written FOS Examination requirement must normally be fulfilled during the first 23 months after entry into the program, and the Oral FOS Examination requirement must normally be fulfilled during the first 24 months after entry into the program, except when unforeseen circumstances prevent the student from meeting the program requirements.

a. Written Field of Study Examination

Upon initiation by the Supervisor, the members of the Supervisory Committee will craft two questions related to the approved Reading List. The questions should require students to



synthesize knowledge, apply theory, and/or demonstrate understanding of methodologies and be amenable to producing a response that is publishable. Upon receiving the question, students will choose one question and have twenty-one calendar days to submit a written, essay-style response, of approximately 20 pages (12-point font) excluding references, figures, and tables. The Examination Committee will have up to two weeks to read and evaluate the essay. At the end of this period, they will meet to discuss the outcome. The student will not be present at this meeting. A member of the academic staff appointed by the Graduate Program Director serves as the Neutral Chair of the discussion. The Neutral Chair is not a member of the examining committee and is nonvoting.

Before the meeting begins, each member of the Examination Committee will submit constructive written feedback on the student's written performance to the Neutral Chair.

Before any discussion of the student's performance, each examiner must provide a non-binding recommendation (pass/fail) of the student's performance on the written examination by secret ballot. This procedure provides the committee members with a frame of reference upon which to base a full discussion of the student's written performance. The final vote, which is provided orally, is taken after the Committee's discussion.

The evaluation of the written work should be based on the following criteria:

- clarity and organization in responding to the question that was posed; and
- ability to evaluate the results of previous research, quality improvement, etc. and rely on the relevant theories, methods, and results to substantiate arguments.

Outcomes of Written Field of Study Examination

Every effort should be made to reach a unanimous recommendation. Should the outcome of the final vote include at most one negative vote, the student will pass. A student who does not pass the written FOS examination will have the opportunity to retake the examination as outlined below. The Associate Dean Graduate Programs will share the results of the Written Examination along with feedback provided by Examination Committee members with the student within two days of receiving the result and committee feedback.

Retakes of Written Field of Study Examination

After the first failed exam, the student will be entitled to retake the exam no sooner than two months and no later than four months from the date of the first examination. A second failure on the Written FOS Examination requires the Student to withdraw from the program. The graduate program must send the *Recommendation of Required Withdrawal from Graduate Program for Failure to Maintain Academic Progress* to gpoform@ucalgary.ca.

b. Oral Field of Study Examination

Although the Written and Oral Field of Study Examination take place separately, the scheduling of both examinations will take place at the same time. The Oral FOS examination should be scheduled to take place no more than one week after the vote on the Written FOS examination. The Oral FOS Examination will only proceed if the student has passed the Written FOS Examination. A member of the academic staff appointed by the Associate Dean Graduate



Programs serves as the Neutral Chair of the examination. The Neutral Chair is not a member of the examining committee and is non-voting. Questions, which are usually asked in rounds, will be based on the Reading List. The Oral FOS Examination is not designed to be another examination of the Written FOS Examination responses. That is to say, examiners should ask questions that are different from those on the Written FOS Examination. The Oral FOS Examination should not exceed two hours (excluding requested breaks and deliberation time for the Committee members). Examiners are encouraged to ask clear and succinct questions. The student will be given reasonable time to answer and should feel free to ask for questions to be repeated or rephrased. If the student has understood the question and cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question, and not attempt to extract an answer by prolonged interrogation or by leading the student. The Neutral Chair will ensure these guidelines be followed during the exam. At the end of the examination, the student is asked to withdraw from the room. Before any discussion of the student's performance, each examiner must provide a non-binding recommendation (pass/fail) of the student's performance on the oral examination by secret ballot.

This procedure provides the committee members with a frame of reference upon which to base a full discussion of the student's overall examination performance. The final vote, which is provided orally, is taken after the Committee's discussion.

Performance on the Oral FOS Examination will be judged on the student's ability to:

- clearly and concisely respond to the questions posed; and
- summarize and critique relevant previous research, quality improvement, etc. from the student's reading list.

Outcomes of Oral Field of Study Examination

Passing the Oral Field of Study Examination

Every effort should be made to reach a unanimous recommendation. Should the outcome of the final vote include at most one negative vote, the student will pass. If the final vote is not a pass, an assessment of the student's oral performance as well as suggestions for improvement should be conveyed in writing to the student. A student who does not pass the oral FOS examination will have the opportunity to retake the examination as outlined below.

Failing the Oral Field of Study Examination

Should the outcome include two or more negative votes, the committee's recommendation to the Graduate Program Director will be *fail*. In the case of a fail,

- **The Neutral Chair** must inform the Student of the Committee's recommendation immediately following the vote of the examination committee. The Neutral Chair will submit the final recommendation of fail as well as a written report to the Associate Dean Graduate Programs within one working day of the completion of the examination.
- **The Examiners** write brief memos to the Associate Dean Graduate Programs explaining the reasons for their votes and submit these memos within five working days from the date of the examination.



- **The Associate Dean Graduate Programs** may uphold the fail in the case of a clear fail or refer to FGS for decision in the case of an unclear fail. If the Associate Dean Graduate Programs upholds the fail, after consultation with the Supervisor, they then summarize the essential points from the memos to the student, copied to the Supervisor and Faculty of Graduate Studies (gpoform@ucalgary.ca).

- **The Graduate Program** must send the *Notice of a Failed Candidacy Component* to the student within ten working days from the date of the examination. The *Notice* and the post-exam memos must be kept in the student's file. If there is an appeal, the *Notice* and supporting documents must be submitted to Faculty of Graduate Studies (gpoform@ucalgary.ca).

Note: In instance of a potential of a conflict of interest such as when the Associate Dean Graduate Programs is a member of the examining committee, the Dean or a designate will substitute for the Associate Dean Graduate Programs.

Retakes of Oral Field of Study Examination

After the first failed oral FOS exam, the student will be entitled to retake the exam no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the date of the first examination. A second failure on the Oral FOS Examination requires the student to withdraw from the program. The graduate program must send the *Recommendation of Required Withdrawal from Graduate Program for Failure to Maintain Academic Progress* to gpoform@ucalgary.ca.

Appeal of Failed Field of Study Examination Results

In the case of a failed oral FOS examination, the student has the right to appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies following the procedures described in the *Graduate Calendar* under [Academic Regulations – Appeals – Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings](#).

Appendix A
Faculty of Nursing
Doctor of Nursing Program Flow Chart and Timeline
Candidacy Examination Process in Box

