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Introduction: This document was developed to serve as a reference for faculty and doctoral students at the University of Connecticut School of Nursing. The document presents “Core Content” relevant for all doctoral students first, followed by program-specific content to address areas in which, requirements are different for each program. We hope you find the document helpful.

General Doctoral Advisement Procedures 2014

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1. General Advisement Procedures:

- a. Students are admitted based on the match between their research interests and that of the faculty. A MA is assigned by the PhD or DNP Admissions & Progressions Committee based on that match. Changes in MA can be made at the discretion of the student and/or MA but are not advised to be made lightly as these types of changes can delay progression.
- b. School of Nursing policy states that e-mail communications between students and faculty should be addressed within 2 business days following receipt of message. This is to foster prompt communication between advisors and advisees.
- c. Additional School of Nursing policy states that faculty are expected to provide feedback on chapter drafts, IRB applications, etc. to students within 2 weeks following receipt of submission.

- d. Major Advisors with 9-month appointments are expected to adhere to the above timelines during the summer months. MAs should notify students of vacation plans and develop timelines for communication during the summer months.

2. The Doctoral Advisory Committee: Structure and Function

- a. An advisory committee will collectively mentor doctoral students throughout coursework, dissertation development, general exam, final defense, and manuscript preparation. The role of the committee is to guide development and critique the students' work in progress. Committees generally consist of 3 members (1 Major Advisor and 2 Associate Advisors) configured by the end of the 1st year of full-time study. Two reviewers or readers are added once the student is in the general exam and dissertation implementation phase.
- b. A combination of UConn faculty and non-UConn faculty members may be assembled to form an advisory committee. All committee members must hold a terminal degree but do not necessarily have to be nurses. Of the three core members of the advisory committee, the Major Advisor and at least 1 Associate Advisor **MUST** be members of the UConn faculty with a Graduate School appointment; only the MA needs to be from the School of Nursing. Roles for various committee members follow below. Associate Advisors from outside the University must be approved for Graduate faculty status. An up-to-date CV is submitted to the program director (DNP or PhD) and in-turn to the Graduate School for approval. Approval must be in place prior to submission of Program of Study, General Exam, and/or Dissertation defense.

3. Role of Major Advisor (MA)

- a. The Admissions Committee of the respective doctoral program selects the MA for the student at the time of admission. This determination is made by matching the area of interest indicated on application materials with a faculty member who has expertise in that area. Once admitted, the student must schedule an advising appointment with the MA prior to registering for course work.
- b. Sometimes, a change in MA is necessary i.e. if a student has a substantive change in direction for their interests. Changes in the MA require a "Change in Major Advisor Form" be completed and submitted to the Doctoral Program Director (DNP or PhD) and then to the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship.
- c. Students should meet with the MA at least twice yearly (usually at least once each semester, more as needed to best support student progression) to review the student's course of study. The student with the MA must complete a Doctoral Progress form annually at the end of the spring semester.
- d. The MA should file Doctoral Advisement notes in the student record at least twice yearly.
- e. Each year in the spring, the MA works with the student to complete end-of-year outcomes report, which should be completed electronically and submitted to the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship.

4. Role of Associate Advisors (AA)

- a. AA's share the responsibility with the MA of assisting with the development of the student's plan of study and doctoral requirements.
- b. The AA's usually have subject matter or methods expertise that brings a complementary perspective to that of the MA and should be selected on that basis.
- c. The student selects associate AA's with the MA.
- d. As stated above, at least one AA must be from the UConn faculty.
- e. For DNP students, the Clinical Preceptor **MUST** be doctorally-prepared and therefore is strongly suggested as one Associate Advisor. (The terminal degree does not need to be in nursing).

5. The Curriculum

- a. Students follow the plan of study for their respective doctoral program. The program of study sequence for required courses is prescribed for both doctoral programs. Specific details are provided in the guidelines for each program.
- b. An official "Plan of Study" must be completed by the student and signed by the student's three-person advisory committee prior to the completion of 12 credits (end of first year of full-time study). The student is responsible for submitting the required number of signed copies to the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship. The Plan of Study is then submitted to the Graduate School through the Admissions and Enrollment Services office, where a copy is maintained in the student's file. Students should also retain their own copies of all signed forms.

6. The General Exam

Processes for the General Exam are different for DNP and PhD students as are timelines. Please refer to respective program descriptions.

7. The Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Procedure: Please read and follow steps carefully as outlined below.

- a. The proposal process is identical for both PhD and DNP students; however, the timeline is different. (Please refer to respective program description for timelines).
- b. The student prepares the Proposal according to [Graduate School Guidelines](#).
- c. Generally speaking, initial drafts of the Proposal should be sent to the MA **only**; the MA will determine when drafts are ready to be distributed to Associate Advisors for their input/feedback. (This is the process both before and after the proposal is approved).
- d. The Dissertation Proposal is reviewed and accepted by the student's 3-person advisory committee (MA and both Associate Advisors). Following this step, the process and role responsibilities are the following:

i. **Student Role:**

The student should provide the MA with **EACH** of the following documents:

1. The Proposal (a well-labeled electronic file is acceptable; please ask your MA for their preferences.)
2. The internal School of Nursing Proposal Approval Form with *electronic signatures from all 3 committee members*.
3. The Graduate School Dissertation Proposal Approval Form with signatures from all 3 committee members. (*These signatures cannot be electronic.*)
4. The students' Plan of Study (downloadable from Grad School website) with signatures from all 3 committee members. (*These signatures cannot be electronic.*)
5. The student is responsible for gathering all signatures on these forms. It is not the responsibility of the MA or Dean's office staff to gather signatures.
6. The student is responsible for submitting the completed hardcopies of the signed Graduate School forms listed above to the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship.

ii. **Major Advisor Role:**

1. The MA should also make recommendations to the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship of 2 additional reviewers. (The Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship has the ultimate responsibility of selecting reviewers, but will consider the requests of the MA).
2. The MA should also submit an electronic copy of the Proposal and the internal review sheet to the Associate Dean for research and Scholarship for distribution to reviewers who prefer an electronic copy.
3. The MA should obtain a copy of an up-to-date CV for all non-UConn members of the advisory committee and submit to the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship at the time the Proposal is submitted.

iii. **The Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship Role:**

1. The Associate Dean sends the Proposal out to 2 additional reviewers with a request for a 2-week turn-around.
2. The Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship will notify the MA of the reviewers' decision/recommendations.

iv. **MA Role:**

The MA supervises any revisions to the dissertation Proposal, including guiding student interactions with reviewers and seeking approval from AA's. Following completion of any revisions indicated by the readers

v. **Student:**

The student provides **one hardcopy** of the **final** proposal along with the IRB approval form to the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship to be sent to the Graduate School at the University. The signed approval form is scanned and combined the

electronic files for each of the above (dissertation proposal and IRB approval form) for archiving in the School of Nursing.

The student may begin data collection once the IRB approval is secured and the Proposal copies are submitted to the Associate Dean's office.

vi. **Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship Role:**

The Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship submits the signed graduate form, final Proposal and IRB Approval Form to the Graduate School.

8. IRB Application Process: Please note: IRB applications should not be submitted until the Proposal has been fully approved by the 3 person committee, changes made from the review by external reviewers can be made as amendments.

- a. It is the responsibility of the MA to oversee and approve student IRB applications prior to submission.
- b. The IRB application must be approved internally within the School of Nursing before submission to the IRB. Dr. Deborah McDonald, the School's IRB representative (or her representative), provides the initial review and notifies the Major Advisor when the application is ready for internal approval. (This pre-review step saves time once the application is submitted to the IRB and ensures the quality of all IRB applications being issued from within the SON).
- c. There are 2 *different procedures* to be followed at this point, depending on whether the student will be submitting to the UConn IRB or to an external IRB.
 - For students NOT applying to the UConn IRB, all IRB materials should first be approved by the MA and then sent as an e-mail attachment to Dr. McDonald requesting her to review.
 - For students applying to the UConn IRB, the review by Dr. McDonald should be accomplished through InfoEd as described in "f" below.
- d. All student IRB applications are submitted with the name of the MA as the PI, not the student. (UConn policy). For applications being submitted to non-UConn IRB's, the MA must designate an affiliation with that organization through the CITI Program online and complete any additional modules specific to that institution. This must be done before the student submits the official IRB application.
- e. The MA must notify the UConn IRB office via e-mail to request that the student be added to their InfoEd Profile. This step must be completed before the student submits the IRB Application.
- f. Submission of IRB applications is done electronically through "INFOED". *Please note that IRB approval must be obtained prior to final Dissertation Proposal submission to the Graduate School, as indicated on the Graduate School form.
- g. IRB approval must also be secured from the clinical agency where the research will be conducted. The MA supervises this process as well. Most often, IRB approval should be secured first from the clinical agency, followed by the UConn IRB. The MA supervises the student's interaction with the UConn IRB to facilitate this process.

9. Defense of the Dissertation (Taken directly from the Graduate School guidelines)

- a. The final examination (or final defense) shall be oral and under the jurisdiction of the advisory committee. It shall deal mainly with the subject matter of the dissertation. The examination shall be held not earlier than seven days after a working copy of the complete dissertation has been submitted to the Graduate Records Office and not later than August 31 for a Summer degree, December 31 for a Fall degree, or thirteen days prior to commencement for a Spring degree. Invitation to participate in the examination is issued by the advisory committee, (In the School of Nursing, the invitation is extended by the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship) although any member of the faculty may attend. No fewer than five members of the faculty, including all members of the candidate's advisory committee, shall participate in the final examination unless written approval for a lesser number has been secured in advance from the Dean of the Graduate School.
- b. MAs mentor and guide students in the preparation for the final defense as necessary.
- c. The decision as to whether a candidate has passed, conditionally passed, or failed the examination rests solely with the advisory committee, which shall take into account the opinions of other participating faculty members and other experts. The vote of the advisory committee must be unanimous. Immediately following the examination, the MA shall communicate the results to the student and send the official report on the examination to the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship. The Associate Dean will then submit the official report to the Graduate Records Office.
- d. The approval page of the dissertation is signed by all three advisors with their names only, no degree credentials.
- e. After completing the defense, the student has 10 days to submit all remaining paperwork to the Graduate Records and the library.
- f. In addition to the copies required by the Graduate School, the student is also required to provide a bound copy of the approved dissertation to each committee member and one for the Sheila A. Packard Doctoral Student Reading Room.
- g. As a reminder, IRB permissions need to be closed out when the study is completed. Students should check with the appropriate IRB for specific procedures required.

10. Timelines for Planning Program Completion:

This document works backwards from the end of the semester. The last day for finishing everything (thereby fulfilling degree requirements) is the last day of the fall and spring terms and August 24th for summer degree conferral.

At the beginning of the semester you plan to defend, do the following:

1. Call the Graduate School and find out the last day for submission of everything.
2. The defense needs to be scheduled no later than 10 days prior to that.
3. Obtain the latest copy of the Graduate School guidelines and forms from the Graduate School website.
4. Plan to present your research/project at the School of Nursing Annual Athena Research Conference.

5. Set the defense date with your committee at the beginning of the semester. It is the student's responsibility to coordinate advisory committee schedules for the defense date. Notify the Associate Dean's assistant of the tentative date and confirm it when the date is finally set. Reserve a room and AV equipment with the Associate Dean's assistant (6-0537). Tip: Don't make it the last possible day, in case you run into any delays along the way.
6. Get faculty travel dates for the semester and also dates when school is not in session (Breaks, major conferences for faculty, etc). This way, you will know when you can reach people during the semester. Don't expect faculty to read during Thanksgiving and Spring break. Most are willing to read in summer, if you are trying to get ready to graduate.
7. Set a calendar of deadlines at the beginning of the semester with your advisor and committee members and stick to it. If a deadline is missed, your advisor will counsel you about options. If a 2nd deadline is missed, it is likely that the defense will be canceled and you will need to wait to graduate an additional semester.
8. Schedule a meeting with the Grad School office to review your dissertation copy and address details you need to know as you prepare to graduate. You must have a draft of the complete dissertation for review at this meeting. Be sure to use the Graduate School's formatting guidelines, which are based on APA style, but are slightly different.
9. Once your 3 members have approved the dissertation, your advisor may want to have a committee meeting that verifies that the student is ready for defense before going to the outside readers. If so, make sure this is part of the schedule at the beginning of the semester. Once you have a final copy, you need to deliver it to the advisory committee.
10. **Two weeks prior to the defense**, the following actions must be completed *by the student*:
 - The Graduate School needs the announcement 2 weeks prior to the defense so it can be published in UConn Today, etc. The [UConn Today notice](#) needs to be completed online and submitted.
 - The student must complete and submit the Dissertation Tentative Approval page to the Graduate School. (Signatures of committee members are no longer required on this form).
 - A "tentatively approved" copy of the dissertation must be submitted electronically to the Graduate School (please do not send hardcopies). The MA and both AA's should be cc'd on this submission. (Please refer to the Grad School website: "Dissertation Completion Process" for specifics re: paperwork submission and required timelines).

11. After the Defense

After you have successfully defended your dissertation, there are still a few things you need to do. You have 10 days to make any corrections and to deliver the final pristine copies of the dissertation to the Graduate School. If your dissertation does not follow their guidelines exactly, they will reject it, which is costly and time

consuming, so be sure to get it right the first time (emphasizing the importance of a Graduate School pre-review appointment prior to defense). It is also traditional that you present bound copies of your dissertation to your advisory committee (all 5) and a copy to the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship. Your final step is to go to the School of Nursing Graduate Reception followed by Graduate Commencement to celebrate.

PhD Students

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1. Curriculum
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3. General Exam
4. Advancement to Candidacy
5. Dissertation
6. Timelines for PhD Students
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1. Curriculum: See PhD Curriculum Sequence 2014

2. The Scholarly Portfolio: Students will develop a scholarly portfolio which will include the product(s) from the research internships, at least one published manuscript, at least one peer-reviewed poster/podium presentation from a professional conference external to UConn, and a copy of a grant application that has been submitted for review by an external agency. The Scholarly Portfolio contents will be approved by the student's advisory committee and contents maintained in the student's file in the office of Admissions and Enrollment Services (AES).

3. The General Exam: The product of the general exam is a publishable manuscript in a peer-reviewed journal on a topic and format approved by the student's 3-person advisory committee. Acceptable formats include: integrated or systematic review (using the PRISMA guidelines), meta-synthesis, meta-analysis, concept or theory analysis, philosophy paper, and secondary analysis of publically available data. Formats that require IRB review are *not* permitted, because the research could not be considered independent since the major advisor must be the PI for UCONN IRB submission. The overall concept and format for the General Exam must be approved by the student's committee prior to the student commencing the work on the paper to be used for General Exam (see General Exam forms (see PhD student resources)).

The student will submit the completed paper to his/her 3-person advisory committee. The committee will not provide editorial feedback; they will only determine if the paper is sufficiently developed to proceed to the oral portion of

the general exam. The committee may provide general feedback on needed areas of revision. For example, the committee may indicate that a problem exists with the analysis, but the feedback may not be specific and may not include any advice on how to address the concerns. The student will revise and resubmit, as necessary, until the paper receives the approval of the advisory committee.

The student will submit the committee-approved paper to his/her two readers. The readers will not provide editorial feedback; they will only determine if the paper is sufficiently developed to proceed to the oral portion of the general exam. The readers may provide general feedback on needed areas of revision, but the feedback may not be specific and may not include any advice on how to address concerns. The student will revise and resubmit, as necessary, until the paper receives the approval of the two readers.

With the advanced permission of the three-person advisory committee, a student may seek technical assistance on a specific issue, e.g., statistical question, if the issue is beyond what a typical graduate student would be expected to know as a result of the program of study. Otherwise, the paper should reflect only the student's efforts as would be expected on any exam.

The PhD student schedules the oral portion of the general exam. The oral portion of the exam will include discussion and defense of the paper as well as an overview of the student's program of study underlying the paper and a plan for future program of research, including the dissertation topic. The 5-person general exam committee will examine not only the paper contents and the student's research plan, but also the student's ability to apply philosophy, theory, and research methods within the context of the student's stated area of expertise. Please use the General Exam Forms (found below in resources) at the oral defense for faculty comments and signatures. The form needs to be submitted to the PhD Program Director by the MA once the oral defense of the General Exam is completed.

The completed paper must be submitted for publication as part of the student's scholarly portfolio; however, the paper may not be applied toward the three-article alternate dissertation option. Following the defense of the general exam, the general exam committee may provide additional feedback to the student to strengthen the manuscript and to enhance its chances for acceptance.

Once the student passes the general exam, s/he may proceed to the PhD degree dissertation phase.

4. Advancement to Candidacy: The student advances to candidacy when the following conditions are met:

- Fulfillment of the language requirements and any related or supporting-area of study (In the School of Nursing, the language requirement is met thorough the completion of two courses from the same department outside of the School of Nursing that are supportive of the dissertation.)
- Fulfillment of the residence requirement (two consecutive semesters of fulltime study)
- Fulfillment of the research internship
- Passing the General Examination
- Completion of all coursework on the Plan of Study
- Graduate Executive Committee approved dissertation proposal
- A letter of candidacy is sent to students who have successfully completed all requirements for the degree except the dissertation and oral defense.

5. The Dissertation:

Options: All students have two options for the dissertation: A traditional 5-6 chapter dissertation and a non-traditional three article option. The non-traditional dissertation includes 5 chapters with the same first (introduction) and last (discussion/application) chapters as the traditional dissertation. The other three chapters consist of papers that have been submitted for publication. The student and the advisory committee will determine the contents of the three papers. Suggestions for the papers include, but are not limited to: one or more research reports, a literature review/synthesis paper, a methods paper and a clinical application paper. Once students register for dissertation credits, they must participate in a mandatory dissertation seminar each semester until the dissertation is complete. If the student switches topic/methods for the dissertation following coursework completion, the student may need to take additional cognates to support the successful completion of the dissertation.

6. Timelines for PhD Students:

The equivalent of at least three years of full-time study beyond the baccalaureate or two years beyond the master's degree (in the same or a closely related field) is required. All work must be completed within a period of eight years of the beginning of the student's matriculation in the degree program, or, if the student entered with a master's degree in the same or a closely related field, the doctorate must be completed within seven years. The general examination must be passed within four years of the beginning of the

student's matriculation in the degree program. Failure to complete the work within the periods specified or failure to maintain continuous registration will require reevaluation of the student's entire program and may result in a notice of termination. A one-time extension of the student's terminal date of no longer than two years is considered only when there is substantial evidence that the student has made regular and consistent progress toward completion of degree requirements. A detailed recommendation to extend the terminal date must be submitted in a timely manner to the Graduate School. Approval is granted by the Dean of the Graduate School.

7. Resources

[Plan of Study- Full Time](#)

[Plan of Study- Part Time](#)

[BS in Nursing to Doctor of Philosophy](#)

[PhD Curriculum](#)

[Graduate School Plan of Study Form](#)

[Doctoral Proposal Review Cover Sheet](#)

[Dissertation Proposal and Instructions](#)

[Report on the Final Examination](#)

DNP Students

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1. Curriculum
2. Scholarly Portfolio (DNP Program Completion Documents – see my comments)
3. General Exam
4. Clinical Practice Dissertation
5. Timelines for DNP Students
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1. **Curriculum:** See the appropriate DNP Plan of Study (FT or PT). Students should plan to follow either the full or part-time plan of study prescribed. (On rare occasions and in collaboration with the Graduate School and MA, students may be permitted to deviate from the prescribed plan of study).

2. Scholarly Portfolio

Students will develop a scholarly portfolio, which will include at least one published manuscript, at least one peer-reviewed poster/podium presentation from a professional conference external to UConn, and a copy of a grant application that has been submitted for review by an external agency. The Scholarly Portfolio contents will be approved by the student's advisory committee and contents maintained in the student's file in the office of Admissions and Enrollment Services (AES).

- 3. The General Exam:** The goal of the General Exam is to evaluate synthesis of core content as noted in the General Exam Criteria. (AACN DNP *Essentials* (2006)).
- a. Topics for the General Exam will be student-specific and consistent with the student's specialty area of practice. (I.e. Neonatal APRNs will select a topic under the broad umbrella of neonatology; pediatric APRNs will select a topic pertaining to pediatrics, etc.).
 - b. The General Exam will include a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation by each student per the most current version of the DNP General Exam criteria.
 - c. The topic for the General Exam may *not* be the same as the specific topic of the clinical practice dissertation. The rationale for this is that the student's terminal degree will be in practice, as opposed to a single topic under that umbrella. Additionally, the General Exam presentation criteria were developed from both the AACN DNP *Essentials* (2006) and the UConn School of Nursing terminal program objectives. The idea is that the presentation serves as a competency outcomes measure near program completion.
 - d. The major advisor must approve the topic of the general exam, with input from the advisory committee. Evidence of topic approval via e-mail or other means should be placed in the students file and a copy kept by the MA.
 - e. The student *independently* prepares the presentation. MA's and committee members are not permitted to preview/request revision for the General Exam presentation.
 - f. General Exams are conducted during the spring semester in which the student intends to graduate.
- 4. The Clinical Practice Dissertation (CPD):** Options: All students have two options for the dissertation: A traditional 5-6 chapter dissertation and a non-traditional three article option. The non-traditional dissertation includes 5 chapters with the same first (introduction) and last (discussion/application) chapters as the traditional dissertation. The other three chapters consist of papers that have been submitted for publication. The student and the advisory committee will determine the contents of the three papers. Suggestions for the papers include, but are not limited to: one or more research reports, a literature review/synthesis paper, a methods paper and a clinical application paper. Once students register for dissertation credits, they must participate in a mandatory dissertation seminar (NURS 5895) each semester until the dissertation is complete. If the student switches topic/methods for the dissertation following coursework completion, the student may need to take additional coursework to support the successful completion of the dissertation. (Please refer to General Format for Dissertation Development Document).

5. Timelines for DNP Students:

Coursework related to the development of the Clinical Practice Dissertation Seminar courses begin during semester 1 for full time students and semester 3 for part time students. The dissertation topic is developed, implemented and concluded over a 5-semester long time period and in conjunction with the DNP Residency Courses. During this time, students will work closely with their MA's, preceptors, and other committee

members toward the development of the CPD document. Please refer to “General Format for the Clinical Practice Dissertation” document for further details.

6. Resources

[DNP Plan of Study- Full Time](#)

[DNP Plan of Study- Part Time](#)

[American Association of Colleges of Nursing \(AACN\)- DNP Essentials](#)

[Graduate School- Change in Plan of Study Form](#)

[Graduate School Plan of Study Form](#)

[Doctoral Proposal Review Cover Sheet](#)

[Dissertation Proposal and Instructions](#)

[Report on the Final Examination](#)