



PhD in Nursing

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Fall 2023 – Summer 2024

"Nurse Leaders Begin Here"

PhD Program Handbook

Table of Contents

Welcome from the Dean.....	3
Welcome from the Associate Dean of Advanced Education.....	3
Welcome from the Director of Doctoral Education	3
Mission Statement.....	3
Purpose	4
Department Graduate Faculty.....	4
Program Information.....	4
Contact Information.....	4
Program Requirements	5
Advisory Committee Guidelines	5
Degree Program Benchmarks.....	6
Program Timeline	8
Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines	8
Annual Mandatory Individual Development Plan (IDP).....	9
Discipline Resources	9
University Resources	10
The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development	10
Academic Success Center	10
Alumni Association	10
Commencement Office	10
Office of Diversity Initiatives	10
Disability Resource Center (DRC).....	10
Office of International Student and Scholars	10
Jean Nidetch Women's Center	10
The Intersection	11
UNLV Libraries	11
Office of Student Conduct.....	11
Military and Veteran Services Center	11
The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office.....	11
Writing Center	11
Handbook Information	12



Welcome from the Dean

On behalf of the faculty and staff, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the PhD program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) School of Nursing. We are very happy that you have chosen UNLV to continue your nursing education. At the UNLV School of Nursing, we pride ourselves on creating a warm and dynamic student-centered environment. Our motto is Nurse Leaders Start Here. You will find many opportunities here for professional growth and opportunities. This handbook provides information needed to facilitate your progression in your program of study. While the primary responsibility for your success lies with each of you, many individuals stand ready to assist you in your efforts. If you have additional questions, contact your advisor who will be happy to help. You've made the right choice by choosing the UNLV School of Nursing. We're here to help you advance your nursing career through discovery and scholarship. We really believe in you and are happy to be a part of your professional journey.

Best regards,
Angela Frederick Amar, PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN
Dean and Professor



Welcome from the Associate Dean of Advanced Education



Welcome to UNLV and the School of Nursing. We are happy that you are here! We are excited to partner with you to facilitate your educational journey. Our online graduate programs serve your need for flexibility. We have an excellent curriculum that enhances your leadership and practice and provides you with the knowledge and skills necessary to translate evidence into practice. The faculty is committed to a curriculum that is delivered through a lens of equity and justice and how you, the health care practitioner, leads systemic change and provides exceptional care in organizations and communities. This Handbook is your tool to guide you through the program. As the Associate Dean of Advanced Education, I am here to serve you, the student.

Imelda Reyes, DNP, MPH, FNP-BC, CNE, FAANP
Associate Dean of Advanced Education and Professor in Residence

Welcome from the Director of Doctoral Education

Dear colleague: Congratulations on becoming part of the UNLV School of Nursing PhD Program! You are on your way to becoming part of an important community of scholars, educators, researchers, and leaders. In this program, you will have a myriad of opportunities to grow in each of these roles, experience professional growth and mentorship, gain skills as a scientist, generate new knowledge, and participate in the development of collegial and supportive networks with your colleagues. This handbook is your guide to getting started and taking an active part in your PhD journey and will serve as a reference for you throughout. This will be a challenging and exciting time, and I hope you will feel free to reach out with questions, concerns, or just to say "Hi." Everyone at the School of Nursing is here to help you, but we can only do that if you let us know when you need us! We're so happy you're here and are excited to see what you will do next.

In welcome,
Candace W. Burton, PhD, RN, AFN-BC, FNAP
Director of Doctoral Education and Associate Professor



Mission Statement

Our mission is to advance the science of health and healthcare by preparing nurse clinicians, educators, leaders, and researchers to optimize health equity and wellness of individuals, families, communities, and populations. The School of Nursing promotes, improves, and innovates nursing through interdisciplinary and transformational education, scholarship, practice, and community engagement.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the UNLV Graduate Catalog, as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: valarie.burke@unlv.edu or gradassociatedean@unlv.edu.

Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Faculty must hold graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#).

Program Information

Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing

Nursing Education

Clinical Nursing Research

Post-DNP to PhD

Contact Information

Associate Dean of Advanced Education

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702-895-3987

Director of Doctoral Education

Dr. Candace Burton, candace.burton@unlv.edu

702-895-4451

Director of Student Services

Ms. Elizabeth Gardner, NURS.StudentAffairs@unlv.edu

702-895-5923

Graduate Engagement and Retention Coordinator

Ms. Nancy Esposito, NURS.StudentAffairs@unlv.edu

702-895-3812

Graduate Administrative Assistant unlv.nursing@unlv.edu

702-895-3360

Department Website and Office Information

Bigelow Health Sciences Building (BHS), Room 419

4505 Maryland Parkway, Box 453018

Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-3018

Voice: 702-895-3360 / Fax: 702-895-4807

Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding [admission, coursework and culminating experience](#) are found in the graduate catalog.

A grade point average of 3.0 must be maintained in all courses required for the degree; no grade less than B in any course is acceptable for curricular completion of the program.

Sample Required PhD Program Core Courses

Course Number and Title	Credit Hours
NURS 770 Knowledge Development in Nursing	3
NURS 780 Quantitative Research Methods in Nursing	3
NURS 781 Qualitative Research Methods in Nursing	3
NURS 749 Interdisciplinary Research & Scholarship Seminar	2-6
NURS 771 Theory Development in Nursing	3
NURS 742 Foundation to Research Designs in Nursing	3
NURS 775 Statistical Methods for Nursing Research I	3
NURS 776 Statistical Methods for Nursing Research II	3
NURS 800 Scholarly Writing for Dissemination	3
NURS 785 Special Topics	3
NURS 797 Dissertation	12
TOTAL	41-45

Additional Courses for Nursing Education Sub-Plans

Course Number and Title	Credit Hours
NURS 774 Educational Theory & Philosophy for Nursing	3
NURS 709 Teaching and Learning in Nursing Education	3
NURS 710 Course Level Evaluation Strategies for Nurse Educators	3
NURS 724 Developing and Evaluating Curriculum for Nursing Education	4
NURS 733 Nursing Education Practicum I	2
NURS 790 Independent Teaching Practicum Seminar	1
NURS 791 Independent Teaching Practicum	1-5
TOTAL	17-22

Additional Courses for Clinical Research Sub-Plan

Course Number and Title	Credit Hours
NURS 759 Clinical Research: Advanced Study Design	3
NURS 787 Advanced Quantitative Research Methods in Nursing*	3
NURS 786 Advanced Qualitative and Mixed Methods for Nursing Research*	3
NURS 792 Research Ethics and Inclusion: Vulnerable Populations and Lifespan Considerations	3
NURS 779 Writing a Research Grant Application	3
TOTAL	12

*Note: For courses marked *, only one is required.*

Please note that courses and sub-plans are subject to change, and these lists are intended only as examples. Official degree requirements are found in the graduate catalog.

Advisory Committee Guidelines

For programs that require a thesis or dissertation, a graduate advisory committee is mandatory and must conform to the Degree Progression Policies and Procedures provided in the graduate catalog.

Membership on PhD in Nursing Graduate Advisory Committees (GACs) is to be determined by the student in consultation with their advisor, other members of the faculty, the Director of Doctoral Education, and/or

others as needed. GAC Chairs must be full-time members of the School of Nursing Faculty. While the student's advisor may also serve as Chair of the GAC, this is not required. Two additional faculty GAC members from the School of Nursing with appropriately approved graduate faculty status privileges and one faculty member from outside the School of Nursing (Graduate College Representative) are also required for a complete GAC.

Degree Program Benchmarks

Students in the PhD Program in Nursing are expected to have identified and confirmed the membership of their GAC no later than the end of the 6th trimester of study. Students should meet regularly with their advisor and/or GAC chair and other GAC members in preparation for development and completion of the Comprehensive Examination, Dissertation Proposal, and Dissertation.

Comprehensive Examination

Concurrent with completion of final coursework (prior to NURS 797), the student should schedule the Comprehensive Examination (CE).

The CE process includes determination of **3** critical dates:

1. The beginning of the three-week independent work period. During this period the student may not consult with member of the GAC, other current or former School of Nursing faculty members, or any other academic expert regarding the CE, its composition, or content. The independent work period must begin no later than Week 10 of the trimester in which the CE will be completed.
2. The due date for submission of the written CE to the Student Services Office for distribution of the written CE to the GAC for review.
3. The due date for completion of review and grading by the GAC, and submission of comments and final grade determination to the Student Services Office for review and confirmation. The GAC Chair will notify the student of the final result.

The written CE must be formatted according to School of Nursing Guidelines (see Discipline Resources below) and submitted electronically in either MS Word or Adobe PDF file format. In addition, the GAC may request that the student complete an oral examination on the content of the CE. This must be determined by the GAC when submitting comments and grading to the Student Services Office and be scheduled no later than 2 weeks prior to the end of the trimester.

The GAC must unanimously agree that the student has passed the CE, including both written and oral examinations if requested, before the student may enroll in NURS 797 Dissertation. If the student does not pass the written examination on the first attempt, a second attempt must be scheduled no sooner than 3 months and no later than 6 months following the first attempt. If the student does not pass the written examination on the first attempt, the student will be placed on probation through the Graduate College. If the student is not successful in the second attempt, they will be separated from the PhD Program in Nursing.

If an oral examination is requested, and the student does not pass the oral examination, the student is considered to have failed the CE and must schedule a second CE attempt as described above. In such a case, the student must repeat BOTH written and oral examinations to pass the CE. If the student does not pass the CE on the first attempt, the student will be placed on probation through the Graduate College. If the student is not successful in the second attempt, they will be separated from the PhD Program in Nursing.

Dissertation Proposal

Upon successful completion of the CE, the student should begin developing the Dissertation Proposal and determine a date for the Dissertation Proposal Defense. The complete written Dissertation Proposal must be submitted to the GAC no less than **2 weeks** before the oral Dissertation Proposal Defense Date. The student should prepare a 20-30 minute presentation on the Dissertation Proposal for the GAC on this date. The GAC will critique and comment on the written proposal and oral presentation at this time. The Dissertation Proposal must be unanimously approved by the student's GAC at the time of the oral defense. If the GAC cannot come to a unanimous decision at the time of the defense, the GAC chair will communicate the committee's concerns to the student and request revisions to the Dissertation Proposal. This process for addressing the committee's concerns on the written proposal and oral presentation may be repeated until the

GAC comes to consensus OR a maximum of 2 attempts. If the student does not pass the Dissertation Proposal Defense on the first attempt, the student will be placed on probation through the Graduate College. If the student is not successful in the second attempt, they will be separated from the PhD Program in Nursing.

Dissertation

There are two possible formats for the complete Dissertation:

1. The multiple-article Dissertation
2. The traditional format Dissertation

The student should consult with the GAC to determine which format the final Dissertation will take. Each format is detailed below.

The **multiple-article** Dissertation consists of the following elements:

- Dissertation Abstract
- Introduction and Background and Significance
- Theoretical Framework (if not incorporated in a subsequent section)
- A minimum of **3** professional-quality manuscripts determined by the GAC to be suitable for publication. The three-article dissertation must include a minimum of three articles reporting on research or scholarship undertaken as a doctoral student at UNLV (prior research, scholarship, creative activity, articles or publications may not be used in a UNLV dissertation). By the time of the final defense, each article included in the Dissertation must be under-review, in-press, or published in a peer-reviewed professional journal.
- In addition to the articles, this format requires bridge sections introducing and linking each of the articles to form a cohesive document. Each article thus serves as a chapter within the larger dissertation.
- Conclusion and Implications
- Tables and appendices such as original study recruitment materials, questionnaires, surveys, interview guides, and/or other supporting documents.

For this format, it is strongly recommended that the student and GAC work together to identify appropriate target journals for each of the Dissertation manuscripts and that the student format each paper according to the Author Guidelines of that journal. The Abstract, Introduction and Background and Significance, Theoretical Framework, and Conclusion and Implications sections should be formatted according to School of Nursing Guidelines (see Discipline Resources below).

The **traditional format** Dissertation consists of the following elements, with each typically comprising one chapter:

- Introduction
- Background and Significance
- Review of Literature
- Methods
- Recruitment
- Results
 - Study Sample
 - Analysis
 - Findings
- Discussion
- Limitations
- Conclusion and Implications.

For this format, the student should follow School of Nursing Guidelines for formatting the final product (see Discipline Resources below).

Program Timeline

Sample timeline for completion of Benchmarks for the PhD in Nursing

(Full-time; students seeking part-time study status should contact the Student Services office for modified plans of study)

Fall	Spring	Summer	Throughout
Year 1			
Core coursework	Core coursework	Additional coursework or independent study as needed	Meet with PhD Program Advisor
			Identify possible GAC members
Year 2			
Core/subplan coursework	Core/subplan coursework	Additional coursework or independent study as needed	Meet with PhD Program Advisor
Preliminary Dissertation Meeting 1	Preliminary Dissertation Meeting 2	Comprehensive Examination	Confirm GAC composition
			Meet with GAC members
Year 3			
Subplan coursework	Subplan coursework	Additional coursework or independent study as needed	Meet with PhD Program Advisor and GAC members
Preliminary Dissertation Meeting 3	Dissertation	Dissertation	
Complete Dissertation Proposal			
Year 4			
Dissertation	Final Dissertation Defense		

Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the graduate catalog.

NURSING STANDARDS

The American Nurses Association has defined standards and codes by which all nurses practice. As a professional program it is expected that students will demonstrate behaviors that reflect the defined standards of nursing throughout their academic experience. Students in the specialty areas will also be guided by published standards appropriate to their specialty.

American Nurses Association Standards of Nursing Practice

- The collection of data about the health status of the client/patient is systematic and continuous. The data are accessible, communicated, and recorded.
- Nursing diagnoses are derived from health status data.
- The plan of nursing care includes goals derived from the nursing diagnoses.
- The plan of nursing care includes priorities and the prescribed nursing approaches or measures to achieve the goals derived from the nursing diagnoses.
- Nursing actions provide for client/patient participation in health promotion, maintenance and restoration.
- Nursing actions assist the client/patient to maximize his health capabilities.
- The client's/patient's progress or lack of progress toward goal achievement is determined by the client/patient and the nurses.
- The client's/patient's progress or lack of progress toward goal achievement directs reassessment, reordering of priorities, new goal setting and revision of the plan of nursing care.

CODE OF ETHICS

The graduate program also adheres to the Code of Ethics for Nurses as published by the American Nurses Association (2015). Interpretive statements related to the statements identified below may be found at [AMA Ethics](#)

1. The nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person.
2. The nurse's primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population.
3. The nurse promotes, advocates for, and protects the rights, health, and safety of the patient.
4. The nurse has authority, accountability, and responsibility for nursing practice; makes decisions; and takes action consistent with the obligation to provide optimal care.
5. The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth.
6. The nurse, through individual and collective effort, establishes, maintains, and improves the ethical environment of the work setting and conditions of employment that are conducive to safe, quality health care.
7. The nurse, in all roles and settings, advances the profession through research and scholarly inquiry, professional standards development, and the generation of both nursing and health policy.
8. The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public to protect human rights, promote health diplomacy, and reduce health disparities.
9. The profession of nursing, collectively through its professional organizations, must articulate nursing values, maintain the integrity of the profession, and integrate principles of social justice into nursing and health policy.

Annual Mandatory Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are **required** to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form [Formerly known as the Student Annual Review]. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead.

Faculty Advisors/Graduate Coordinators have the option to provide feedback to each student's submitted IDP and provide acknowledgement that they have reviewed the IDP.

Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner.

Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track UNLV metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.

Discipline Resources

Writing Style

The School of Nursing utilizes the American Psychological Association (APA) formatting conventions for all written work. Information on the most current version of this style and relevant documentation can be found at: [APA Style](#).

SIGMA THETA TAU INTERNATIONAL

The Zeta Kappa Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International was chartered at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 1981. The purposes of Sigma Theta Tau are to recognize the achievement of scholarship of superior quality, to recognize the development of leadership qualities, to foster high professional standards, to encourage creative work and to strengthen commitment on the part of individuals to the ideals and purposes of the profession of nursing. Each year invitation to membership is extended to selected students in the undergraduate and graduate programs who demonstrate the qualities identified by the purposes of Sigma Theta Tau. Faculty members and community nursing leaders who

possess the minimum of a Baccalaureate in Nursing are also invited to membership. Meetings of educational nature are planned four times per year. Learn more about the [Zeta Kappa-At-Large Chapter](#).

University Resources

[The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development](#)

The goal of the [Graduate Academy](#) is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

[Academic Success Center](#)

The goal of the [Academic Success Center](#) is to help students do well academically and complete their studies on time. They offer or will refer you to such programs and resources as tutoring, advising, skills testing, career exploration and more. They guide students every step of the way to the many established resources created to ensure they complete their educational goals. Learn more about the programs and services the center currently offers.

[Alumni Association](#)

With an alumni base 140,000 strong, the [UNLV Alumni Association](#) offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

[Commencement Office](#)

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the [commencement office](#) is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for [graduation on time](#) and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College [Student Services Team](#) and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College [RPC Team](#).

[Office of Diversity Initiatives](#)

The vision of the [Office of Diversity Initiatives](#) is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's diversity mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

[Disability Resource Center \(DRC\)](#)

The [DRC](#) is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

[Office of International Student and Scholars](#)

[International Students and Scholars \(ISS\)](#) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

[Jean Nidetch Women's Center](#)

The [Jean Nidetch Women's Center](#) is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

The Intersection

The Intersection is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

UNLV Libraries

UNLV Libraries has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The Graduate & Professional Student Association serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Conduct

The Office of Student Conduct is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Conduct collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Military and Veteran Services Center

The Military and Veteran Service Center is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits experienced staff to assist more than 1,000 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) page.

University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)

- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebemail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the [online reporting form](#), by email at titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu, by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.

Handbook Information

[[Revision Policies and/or Procedures]]

Please include the faculty vote of approval in the table below.

Last revised	Revised by	Department Vote Tally: Yes/No/Abs. (date of vote)	Changes summary
3/22/23	Candace Burton	22/0/1 (4-17-23)	Updated to new template; addition of PhD Core Course requirements