POLICY: The Comprehensive Examination will occur during the final semester of required doctoral coursework preceding enrollment in Dissertation (NURS 797). The student must pass the Comprehensive Examination prior to enrollment in Dissertation. This policy is supplemental to those of the UNLV Graduate College and describes the policy of the School of Nursing PhD in Nursing Program, which, in addition to all UNLV Graduate College policies, applies to students in this program. Should there be a conflict between this policy and those of the UNLV Graduate College, Graduate College policies will prevail.

RATIONALE: The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to assess a doctoral student’s readiness to begin the doctoral dissertation. Specifically, the examination will evaluate a student’s written and oral articulation of a possible dissertation research focus or problem.

PROCEDURE:

I. Activities for the formation of the Comprehensive Examination Committee
   A. The Student should have committee chair and committee members selected by the Fall semester of the second year of enrollment in the program.

II. Composition of the Comprehensive Examination Committee
   A. The Comprehensive Examination Committee is composed of the nursing faculty members of the student’s dissertation committee. In accordance with UNLV Graduate College policy, all Comprehensive Examination Committee members have expertise in some aspect of the student’s area of research concentration. The chairperson of the Comprehensive Examination Committee will also serve as the chairperson of the dissertation committee.

III. Preliminary Dissertation Meeting 1 (PDM1)
   A. Two semesters prior to the Comprehensive Exam, the student and committee members (Graduate College Representative member optional) will meet for PDM1 to discuss the broad dissertation topic the student is interested in pursuing. This meeting may be in person or video conference call as approved by the committee. The student should prepare a 1 page document which broadly identifies the research problem, purpose, sample, design, significance and feasibility of the study. The student is responsible for scheduling the meeting with committee members and reserving the room if the meeting is face-to-face or setting up the video conference meeting through creating a UNLV email meeting invitation.

IV. Preliminary Dissertation Meeting 2 (PDM2) and Finalizing Committee Appointment Approval
A. During the semester prior to the Comprehensive Exam, the student and committee (including Graduate College Representative member) will meet, and the student will present a more specific dissertation topic plan. This plan should be no more than 5 pages and could be a short narrative, a schematic, a table or an outline which identifies the research problem, purpose, framework, sample, design, and methods. This meeting may be in person or video conference call as approved by the committee. The student is responsible for scheduling the meeting with committee members and reserving the room if the meeting is face-to-face or setting up the video conference meeting through creating a UNLV email meeting invitation.

B. The chair, committee members and student will complete the Graduate College Appointment of Advisory Committee Approval Form, which identifies the student’s committee membership. The form will then be sent to the Graduate College and a copy placed in the student’s academic file.

https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/forms

V. Scheduling of the Comprehensive Examination

A. By the end of the second week of the final semester of required doctoral coursework preceding enrollment in Dissertation (NURS 797), the student is responsible for scheduling a meeting with the chairperson of the Comprehensive Examination Committee to determine the dates for completing the written and oral components of the Comprehensive Examination. The three dates to discuss are: a) the beginning of the three week independent work period (must start no later than week 7 of the semester), b) submission of the written comprehensive exam (submitted no later than week 10 of the semester) which must be submitted 3 weeks before the oral exam, and c) the date of the oral comprehensive exam (which must be held no later than week 13 of the semester). Upon identifying tentative dates, the student contacts the two other Comprehensive Examination Committee members to confirm their acceptance of these dates. Upon committee agreement of exam dates, the student is responsible for reserving the room for the oral comprehensive exam.

B. During the agreed upon 3 week independent work period, between the start and completion dates of the written component, the student must refrain from discussing the written component of the Comprehensive Examination with all Comprehensive Examination Committee members and all other SON faculty and past or present students as well as seeking any consultation assistance outside of the SON. The student is strongly advised to meet with the chairperson prior to the independent work period start date to review the guidelines to assure compliance with this procedure.

VI. The Written Component of the Comprehensive Examination

A. The written component must be completed no later than the 10th week of the final semester of required doctoral coursework preceding enrollment in Dissertation (NURS 797).

B. The student will write a dissertation pre-proposal paper following the guidelines described in the PhD in Nursing Program Guidelines for the Comprehensive
Examination (Attachment #1). Once the start date begins, the student must comply with the independent work period activities as described in VB above.

C. The student must deliver via e-mail a completed written component to each Comprehensive Examination Committee member no later than three weeks before the date of the oral component. The student must ensure that each committee member has received a copy of the written component. The student is strongly advised to contact each member by e-mail or telephone to verify receipt. A delay in receipt could delay the oral component.

D. If a student is unable to complete the written component of the Comprehensive Examination because of illness or other emergency, the student must notify the chairperson in writing before the scheduled date. The chairperson will notify the other committee members and the PhD Coordinator. The student must reschedule the completion date, and possibly, the date of the oral component.

E. The Comprehensive Committee will complete their review and evaluation of the written component by 1 week prior to the date for the oral component and will submit their evaluation to the chair of the committee using the Rubric for Evaluation of Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination (Attachment #2). The written component is graded as pass/fail. A passing grade must be unanimous from the Comprehensive Examination Committee members. No later than 1 week prior to the oral exam, the committee chair will notify the student whether or not she/he has passed the written exam. If the student does not pass the written exam, the oral comprehensive exam will not be held. The committee chair will notify the PhD coordinator if the student fails the written exam. The student will receive a copy of the completed Rubric for Evaluation of Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination from each committee member, (Attachment #2) for the written exam.

VII. The Oral Component of the Comprehensive Examination

A. The student must travel to the UNLV campus for the oral component of the Comprehensive Examination.

B. The oral component must be held 3 weeks after submission of the written component to the Comprehensive Examination Committee. The 13th week of the final semester of required doctoral coursework preceding enrollment in Dissertation (NURS 797) is the last possible week for the oral component.

C. The student will prepare an informal presentation. The content and format will follow the PhD in Nursing Program Guidelines for the Comprehensive Examination (Attachment #2). Following the presentation, Comprehensive Examination Committee members will ask questions concerning the written and oral content.

D. After the question-and-answer session, the chairperson will ask the student to leave the room. In the student’s absence, committee members will complete the Rubric for Evaluation of Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination (Attachment #3) for the oral component and submit to the chairperson. Then the chairperson will ask the student to return to the room and then inform the student of the grade of the oral component of the Comprehensive Examination. The student will receive a copy of the Rubric for Evaluation of Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination (Attachment #2) for the oral component from each
committee member. The student must receive a passing grade from all Comprehensive Examination Committee members for oral component of the comprehensive examination. The committee chair will notify the PhD coordinator if the student fails the oral comprehensive exam.

E. Once the student passes the Written and Oral Comprehensive Exam, they will submit an abstract of their proposal and Graduate College Prospectus Approval form to the entire Dissertation Committee (SON members and outside member) for approval. Once the abstract is approved and Prospectus Approval form completed with committee signatures, the student will advance to candidacy and is eligible to enroll in dissertation credits (NURS 797). (Prospectus Approval and Advance to Candidacy forms are available on the Graduate College website). https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/forms

F. If the student is unable to complete the oral component because of illness or other emergency, the student must notify the chairperson in writing before the scheduled date. The chairperson will notify the other committee members and the PhD coordinator. The student must reschedule the oral component as soon as possible. If the oral component cannot be rescheduled within 3 weeks of the completion date of the written component, then enrollment in Dissertation (NURS 797) will be delayed accordingly.

VIII. Passing/Failing the Comprehensive Examination

A. A student receiving a passing grade for both the written and oral components of the Comprehensive Examination may enroll in Dissertation (NURS 797).

B. Passing both components of the Comprehensive Examination does not preclude any changes to the dissertation. Changes may be made as deemed necessary by the student, the dissertation committee, or both.

C. If the student does not pass the written exam, the oral exam will not be held.

D. A student who does not pass the initial written, oral, or both components must repeat the failed component(s) before enrollment in Dissertation (NURS 797). The student is responsible for scheduling a re-examination of the failed component(s).

E. If the student does not pass the written exam, she/he must schedule the written exam for the second time no earlier than 3 months and no later than 6 months after the first attempt and follow the same semester date deadlines outlined in III A-E for independent work period, written exam submission and scheduling of written exam. During the time prior to the independent work period for the second written exam attempt, the student may work with the chair and committee members to identify weak areas to prepare for the second written attempt.

F. If the student passes the second written exam, she/he will proceed with the oral exam. If the student passes the oral exam, the committee members will complete the Rubric for Evaluation of Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination. A student receiving a passing grade for both the written and oral components of the Comprehensive Examination may enroll in Dissertation (NURS 797).

G. If the student does not pass the written exam second attempt, she/he will be separated from the program.
H. If the student does not pass the oral exam after attempting and passing the second written exam, he/she will follow the steps outlined below when taking the oral exam for a second time.

I. If the student does not pass the oral exam after the first attempt, the student must schedule the second oral exam no earlier than 3 months and no later than 6 months after the first attempt and follow the same semester date deadlines outlined in IV A-E for independent work period, and scheduling of oral exam.

J. During the time prior to scheduling the second oral exam attempt the student may work with the chair and committee members to identify weak areas to prepare for the second attempt.

K. If the student passes the second oral exam, the committee members complete the Rubric for Evaluation of Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination. A student receiving a passing grade for both the written and oral components of the Comprehensive Examination may enroll in Dissertation (NURS 797).

L. If the student does not pass the second oral exam she/he will be separated from the program.

Approved by Academic Affairs: 7/21/2008, 11/15/2010, 1/12/2015, 8/14/17
Approved by Faculty Organization: 8/04/2008, 1/6/2011, 1/26/2015, 8/23/17
Approved by Dean: 8/04/2008, 1/6/2011, 1/26/2015, 8/23/17
C-15: PhD IN NURSING PROGRAM
ATTACHMENT #1

GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to assess a doctoral student’s readiness to begin the doctoral dissertation. Specifically, the examination will evaluate a student’s written and oral articulation of a possible dissertation research focus or problem.

I. Written Component of the Comprehensive Examination
   A. The written component of the Comprehensive Examination is a formal dissertation pre-proposal paper (maximum length of 20 double-spaced pages with one inch top, bottom, left, and right margins, excluding reference list, tables or appendices). The paper’s content is described below.

II. Oral Component of the Comprehensive Examination
   A. The oral component of the Comprehensive Examination consists of a 20-minute informal oral presentation by the student and a question-and-answer session. The presentation’s content is described below. A student may utilize a whiteboard only for displaying a graphic description of the study framework during the presentation. PowerPoint slides may be used, but the student must follow the 7/7/7 rule. No more than 7 slides, no more than 7 lines to a slide and no more than 7 words in each line. After the presentation, a question-and-answer session will be held. The Comprehensive Examination Committee will ask the student to respond to questions about the written and oral content.

III. Content of the Written and Oral Components of the Comprehensive Examination
   A. The content of the written and oral components of the Comprehensive Examination should address four major areas:

   1. Dissertation Focus or Problem
      a. Identification of the focus or problem and its scope. Delineation of the significance of the focus or problem to the discipline of nursing. A description of the gaps that this focus or problem addresses in the state of the science or the potential discovery of new knowledge. A description of the research purpose or specific aims.

   2. Review of Literature
      a. A synthesis of the state of the science (current evidence) relevant to the focus or problem. A critique of the state of the science relevant to the focus or problem to highlight the innovation of scientific inquiry into this focus or problem. A research purpose or specific aims that logically flow from the synthesis and critique of the state of the science.

   3. Theory /Conceptual Framework (If Applicable)
      a. If applicable, an explanation of the theoretical or conceptual basis of the focus or problem.

   4. Methods
a. A description of the scientific approach (e.g., design and procedure, sample [size, selection method, inclusion and exclusion criteria], study variables, data collection methods [including description of instruments], procedures [intervention when applicable], and data analysis) to address the focus or problem. A scientific and comprehensive justification or rationale for all aspects of the scientific approach.
C-15: ATTACHMENT #2 Part 1

RUBRIC FOR EVALUATION OF WRITTEN AND ORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Reviewers: please fill in the circle ☐ for each element that best reflects your evaluation of that section along with any feedback in the Reviewer Comments column. Note: ANY unsatisfactory rating requires specific comments in the corresponding comment section.

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C-15:8
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PhD IN NURSING PROGRAM
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION EVALUATION SHEET
ATTACHMENT #2 Part 2

Student: ____________________________

Check type of feedback:
   ___ Written Component
   ___ Oral Component

Please state if this section was passed or failed. Reason for passing or failing should be validated in Attachment 3 Part I and that document should be attached to the document. All among members of the student’s dissertation committee should sign this form.

1. Dissertation Focus or Problem:

2. Review of Literature:

3. Theory/Conceptual Framework (If Applicable):

4. Methods:

Check pass/fail status:
   ___ Pass   ___ Fail

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