

Nursing Ph.D. In Nursing Science Program Handbook



**University of Arkansas
for Medical Sciences
2026–2027**

Table of Contents	Page
Welcome.....	1
The Graduate School/College of Nursing Relationship.....	2
Your New College Family.....	2
Overview of the Ph.D. Doctoral Program.....	3
Interprofessional Education (IPE)	3-4
Time Limitations for Completion of Degree	4
Academic Advisor, Faculty Mentor, and Your Program of Study	4-5
Course/Faculty Evaluation.....	6
Financial Assistance for Presenting Research.....	6-7
Assistantships & Pre-Doctoral Scholarships.....	7
Graduate Assistantship/Student Stipend.....	8-9
National Institute of Health Pre-Doctoral Award.....	9
College of Nursing & Arkansas Financial Assistance.....	9-10
<u>Doctoral Candidacy Examination</u>	
Doctor of Philosophy Candidacy Examination.....	10
Procedures for Taking the Candidacy Examination.....	10-15
<u>Dissertation</u>	
Purpose of a Dissertation.....	15 - 16
General Area of Research Interest.....	17
Dissertation Chair.....	17
Composition of Doctoral Dissertation Advisory Committee.....	17 - 18
Change in Dissertation Chair.....	18
Changes in Doctoral Dissertation Advisory Committee Membership.....	19
Dissertation Seminar.....	19
Developing the Proposal.....	19 - 20
Proposal Defense and Approval.....	20
Documentation of Successful Proposal Defense.....	20 - 21
Conducting the Dissertation Research.....	21
The Dissertation Defense and Dissemination Process.....	21 - 22
Pre-Defense meeting.....	22

Technical Requirements in Writing the Dissertation.....	22
Guidance in Developing Dissertation Manuscripts.....	23
Final Defense.....	23 - 25
Dissertation Format & Approval.....	25 - 26
Tips from the Trenches.....	27
Funding.....	27 - 28
Dissertation Data Guidelines.....	28
Ownership of Data/Authorship of Published Manuscript Guidelines.....	28 - 30

Additional Information

Graduation.....	30
Withdrawal & Dismissal Policy.....	30-31

Appendices

	32
Appendix A—Ph.D. Doctoral Student Program of Study.....	33-36
Appendix B—Guidelines for Topics in Nursing.....	37
Appendix C—Qualification for Dissertation Chairperson.....	38-39
Appendix D—Components of a Dissertation.....	40-45
Forms & Links	46-48

Welcome!

We're glad you are here! This handbook is designed to provide you with guidance as you progress through the Ph.D. in Nursing Science doctoral program. The guide will not answer all your questions but does include important material that you should have at your fingertips. The Ph.D. faculty are available to discuss your particular needs at any point.

We offer a number of resources, and this handbook will familiarize you with the major ones. Additional information is available through the *UAMS Graduate School Student Handbook*, the College of Nursing (CON) *Student Handbook*, and the UAMS CON website. This is a working document, so please let us know of additional information that you would recommend for future editions.

Please let us know if there is any way that we can help you during your stay with us. We wish you a stimulating educational journey. Thanks for choosing the UAMS Ph.D. in Nursing Science program!

Sincerely,

Martha Rojo, Ph.D., RN
Assistant Professor, College of Nursing
PhD Director in Nursing Science program
UAMS Graduate School

The Graduate School/ College of Nursing Relationship

The relationship between the Graduate School and the College of Nursing (CON) is complex. All Ph.D. programs at UAMS are “housed” within the Graduate School. The Ph.D. in Nursing Science program is taught primarily by faculty in the CON, but you are considered a student of the Graduate School. Some of the requirements and rules are established by the Graduate School and others by the CON. The assistantships are primarily funded by the Graduate School, while the CON offers several scholarships, travel awards, and grants for dissertation research to students in the Ph.D. in Nursing Science program.

To newcomers (both students and faculty), these requirements can appear confusing. Read all materials carefully and ask questions freely. To learn more about the Graduate School, check out their website: gradschool.uams.edu.

Your New College Family

As a new member of the Ph.D. in Nursing Science program, it is good to know the history of the UAMS College of Nursing. The CON, established in 1953, first offered a baccalaureate program. The master’s program was initiated in 1971, and currently offers a variety of nurse practitioner, nursing administration, and nursing education specialties. In 2013, the CON opened its doors to a new program, the Doctor of Nursing Practice. This program is housed in the CON and is not affiliated with the Graduate School.

The Ph.D. in Nursing Science program accepted its first students in 1997, with the intent of providing the state of Arkansas with nurse leaders who would serve as faculty, clinicians, administrators, and researchers. This research-focused doctoral program is housed with the Graduate School. Currently, 86 persons have graduated from this program.

The CON is located in several areas on the UAMS campuses in Little Rock and in Fayetteville, Arkansas. At UAMS, faculty have offices on the fifth floor in the Education II and Daniel W. Rahn Interprofessional Educational (RAHN) Buildings. For more information on the history, mission, and philosophy of the College, see the UAMS CON catalog.

Overview of the Ph.D. Doctoral Program

Graduates of the Ph.D. in Nursing Science Doctoral program are prepared to advance the art and science of nursing through research and scholarship. They are expected to assume leadership positions in academic and healthcare settings and to influence nursing practice, research, healthcare delivery, policy, and the social awareness of nursing's contributions to the healthcare arena. Selected course work and educational activities are designed to help students develop knowledge in a specialized nursing area, develop and test theories, and acquire the skills and experience for conducting research that is relevant to their area of interest. The program is directed by a cadre of competent faculty and is facilitated by required and elective course work, independent study, and research activities. Our goal is to prepare nurses to advance the art and science of nursing through research and scholarship.

To that end, we offer courses that develop scientific perspectives and research skills. Support courses will help you individualize your program of study. You will conduct and write a dissertation to demonstrate your understanding of research and scholarship by addressing an original research question. As part of your dissertation, you will submit two manuscripts for publication. For more information about courses, please see the Academic Catalog.

Interprofessional Education (IPE).

The university requires all students to complete IPE milestones. Students in the Graduate School who entered a PhD program in fall 2015 and beyond must complete the Exposure phase of the IPE curriculum prior to graduation. The Exposure phase requires participation in two activities.

1. The IPE Exposure workshop: Options for in-person or online are available. The director of the PhD in Nursing Science program provides names of students to the IPE staff, who will then provide instructions to students regarding registration for the IPE Exposure workshop.
2. An Exposure Bridge activity: Activities include movies, book readings, and observations. A list of these activities can be found on the Graduate School website. Registration is required through GUS for the IPE Exposure.

3. Bridge activity: After registering in Student Workday, students will select six of their preferred Exposure Bridge activities.

<https://ipe.uams.edu/interprofessional-education-curriculum-framework/the-seven-core-ipe-activities/>

To receive credit for the IPE Exposure workshop and IPE Exposure Bridge activity, students must complete the pre-work, participate in the exposure activity, and submit any post-documents (such as written reflection or post-test).

Time Limitations for Completion of Degree

All requirements for the degree, including the dissertation, must be completed within seven years from the time the student passes the Ph.D. doctoral comprehensive (candidacy) examination. Student progress on the dissertation is monitored at regular intervals, and action is taken if the student fails to progress. It is to your advantage to start the dissertation as early as is feasible after successfully completing the candidacy examination. It is expected that you will defend the dissertation proposal within two to three semesters following successful completion of the candidacy examination. Students typically have written the first three chapters of the dissertation and received feedback from the dissertation committee members prior to the dissertation proposal defense. Once the student has successfully defended the dissertation proposal, the student submits the proposal to the Institutional Review Board for approval to conduct the research and begins data collection. The time to complete data collection, analyze results, and develop the two manuscripts that are the remaining chapters of the dissertation depend upon the study design, subject accrual, analysis needed, and time for writing. If you establish a timetable from the outset and adhere closely to it, the dissertation research and the associated procedures will be a smoother process for all concerned.

Academic Advisor, Faculty Mentor, and Your Program of Study

The Director of the Ph.D. in Nursing Science program will serve as your academic advisor and provide initial advisement to students. During your first semester, or prior to your entry into the program, the Ph.D. Director will assist you in selecting a mentor. The Ph.D. Director and the faculty member will work with you to plan your program of study. Please see Appendix A (**Program of**

Study form).

Your Plan of Study (POS) includes course work from transfer credits (a six-credit maximum as described in the Graduate School section of the Academic Catalog) and your schedule for completing required program courses. Working with your faculty mentor, the Ph.D. Director, and you will select support courses (electives) that help you meet your research and career goals. You may consider taking elective courses at other colleges or universities. When a specialized course is not available, and depending on faculty resources, you may arrange with a faculty member to develop a Topic in Nursing or Independent Study course alternative. You and the faculty member supervising the Topic in Nursing or Independent Study course will meet to identify the purpose, the learning objectives, and end-products of the course. You will complete the agreement form (see Syllabus) and file it with the course instructor at the beginning of the semester. Your grade for this course will be based upon your meeting the stated objectives for the Topic in Nursing or Independent Study courses.

As we work together to plan your program of study, we recommend that you carefully consider the demands of other life commitments, job responsibilities, family needs, etc. These need to be considered when deciding on a part-time or full-time option.

The faculty mentor will supplement the role of the program academic advisor by offering information, guidance, and support focused on coursework and your development of a research dissertation topic. A student may change mentors as she/he progresses in the program and as her or his interests may change. The mentor may also assist the student in selecting important conferences to attend, meeting local experts in the area of a student's research, identifying organizations to join, selecting the best journals in which to publish, etc. The student is advised to get input from their mentor on various assignments during the coursework, such as synthesis of the literature and pilot proposal. The faculty mentor may become your dissertation chair or a member of the dissertation committee. If the student's focus changes, another faculty member with research expertise in the foci area be chosen as the dissertation chair.

Course/Faculty Evaluation

As part of end-of-course requirements, you will need to complete each course/faculty evaluation to ensure ongoing quality improvement in the educational program. As a member of the student body enrolled in a professional program of study, you are required to complete the course/faculty evaluations as a part of your preparation for your professional role. The CON's Scholastic Non-Cognitive Performance Standards will guide you in an understanding of these expectations. Failure to complete the evaluation process may result in a review, based on these standards, of your performance by administration.

Financial Assistance for Presenting Research

We encourage our doctoral students to submit abstracts to present research findings on their doctoral projects, either as posters or podium presentations, at local, regional, national, or international scientific meetings. We expect you to submit an abstract each year to present scholarly work at either the UAMS-wide Graduate Research Day, Arkansas Nursing Research Day Conference, or other research conferences. Consult with your faculty advisor or dissertation chair. This abstract may focus on a class assignment or early research-related content. As you progress in the program, you are encouraged to submit an abstract to the annual conference of the Southern Nursing Research Society. Your mentor or course faculty are available to assist you in preparing your abstract. Developing and printing a poster for a conference can be costly if you use professional media. A less expensive alternative is to work with an on-line company such as www.makesigns.com or Poster nerd. There are numerous sites available. When faculty are co-authors (presenters) on posters associated with your work as a PhD student, the CON will cover the cost of posters printed at UAMS Creative Services. The faculty needs to approve the poster and submit the request for the poster printing a minimum of two weeks prior to the date the poster is needed.

Due to budgetary constraints, financial assistance for presentations at a conference may not always be available. Do not assume that any expenses will be covered unless you receive written notification that you will be reimbursed.

If assistance becomes available through the UAMS Graduate School or the CON, an e-mail will be sent to all students with the latest information. Currently,

students may receive limited assistance. To qualify for any available funds, the student needs to be the first and/or presenting author to qualify for travel assistance, and this is usually limited to a one-time assistance. Students need to complete the [travel request form](#) from the CON. Submit the completed request form to the business office, and the Director of the PhD in Nursing Science program, who must approve the request prior to forwarding to the Dean of the CON. When submitting, include a copy of your abstract and letter of acceptance of your abstract. This same material is required for the Graduate School if funds are available.

Travel must be pre-authorized. If an individual pays for travel (such as airline reservation) prior to receiving authorization, UAMS may not reimburse the student, even if travel is subsequently approved. If instructed by the funding department, the student may need to pay for travel and submit for reimbursement at the rate the funding department (such as the Graduate School or CON) has stipulated. **Student travel receipts must meet the same guidelines as state employees traveling for UAMS: no credit-card receipts—itemized receipts only; receipts (such as airfare and lodging) must be in the name of the traveling student. No gratuities or alcohol are reimbursed.**

Students who also hold a UAMS employee status (e.g. research assistant or faculty member) must follow the guidelines set forth for all UAMS employees, and travel must be coordinated and approved prior to departure with their home department (such as CON or COM). Please see the CON Business Office for additional information. Contact Tameka Smith at SmithTamekaM@uams.edu for travel questions.

Some organizations, such as the American Heart Association, offer travel scholarships. Students are encouraged to apply for these funds.

Assistantships & Pre-Doctoral Scholarships

Assistantships are a traditional way to support full-time doctoral students, as well as to provide hands-on training in research or teaching. In addition, the assistantship program provides networking opportunities and exposure to academic life. Through the Graduate School, two Assistantships are available to full-time PhD in Nursing Science students annually. Faculty may have

extramural funding for additional assistantships.

Graduate Assistantship/Student Stipend

Purpose: Provide doctoral students with financial assistance and experience working with a faculty as a Research Assistant (RA) or a Teaching Assistant (TA).

Description of Assistantship/Stipend: Depending on the Graduate School's budget, several student stipends are available each year: \$35,000/year for 12 months (August 1–July 30). A 10-month assistantship may be requested, but priority is given to those requesting a 12-month assistantship. The stipend is paid on a monthly basis. Tuition is also paid for fall and spring semesters in addition to the monthly stipend. For the summer, only one credit hour tuition is paid. The recipient is required to work with the assigned faculty member(s) 14–16 hours per week. The student must be enrolled in full-time study (nine credit hours during the Spring and Fall semester) during the duration of the Assistantship.

Eligibility: Any full-time (nine hours per semester) College of Nursing Ph.D. doctoral student is eligible to apply. Preference will be given to students who plan to attend the doctoral program full-time and not to pursue outside employment, and to students who have been in the program for several semesters. In making the selection, consideration will be given to GPA, employment status, and the student's goals.

Application: Submit the **Application for Assistantship/Student Stipend** through the Ph.D. Doctoral Program Director. **The application packet is due by May 1st.** Funding will usually start August 1st (see forms in back of handbook).

Conditions: Assistantships are for one year; a student can reapply for a maximum of five years. All applications will be considered, and assistantship will be awarded based on availability of funds, number of students applying, work standing of the recipient, and academic standing. Additionally, this time may be extended if private funds are available to support the Assistantship. If the recipient drops below full-time study or the recipient is not fulfilling their work responsibilities the stipend can be terminated by the PhD Program Director. Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA while receiving the graduate assistanship. If

the recipient withdraws from the program of study in the middle of a semester, the tuition, fees, and assistantship salary for that semester must be repaid, unless there are extenuating circumstances. For more information, with additional guidelines, please see the *Graduate School Student Handbook*.

National Institute of Health Pre-Doctoral Awards

These up to five-year awards are highly competitive and will require you to work closely with a faculty member who will serve as your sponsor. For more information, please contact the Director of the Ph.D. in Nursing Science program.

College of Nursing and Arkansas Scholarships

To learn more about additional student financial resources, please refer to this link: <https://nursing.uams.edu/future-students/financial/financial-assistance/>. There are numerous scholarships available in the CON, but a limited number are designated for Ph.D. in Nursing Science students.

The Arkansas Graduate Nursing Education Student Loan and Scholarship (AGNSLS) Program, Act 1468, was originally established in 1995 and is designed to increase the number of advanced practice nurses, clinical nurse specialists, and nurse educators in the state of Arkansas. Students who receive nursing loans during graduate school may have these loans converted to scholarship grants according to the terms of the loan. Eligibility is extended to any bona fide Arkansas resident enrolled in an Arkansas accredited graduate nursing program that leads to a master's or doctoral degree in nursing. Students must submit a separate application to be considered for AGNSLS funding.

Students in the Nursing Ph.D. in Nursing Science program at UAMS who are full-time may receive **up to \$50,000** during their doctoral studies. The Doctoral Nurse Educator Loan from AGNSLS has both a part-time and a full-time option. Full-time students must carry at least nine credit hours. Part-time students must carry six to eight credit hours. Full-time students can receive a maximum of \$16,000 per academic year (\$8,000 per fall and spring semester), while students who are part-time may receive up to \$8,000 per academic year (\$4,000 per fall and spring semester). Full-time students receiving the loan/scholarship funding must be employed less than 40 hours per week and preferably no more than 20 hours per week during their graduate studies.

The application for AGNSLS posts twice a year on the UAMS College of Nursing website: <https://nursing.uams.edu/future-students/financial/assistance/loans/agnsls/>

- In the Spring for the upcoming academic year (Fall and Spring awards)
- In the Fall for the upcoming Spring semester (Spring award)

Applicants must apply every year for further funding.

Doctor of Philosophy Candidacy Exam or Doctoral Comprehensive Exam (DCE) (for 2026–2027)

Instructions on the Doctoral Comprehensive (Candidacy) Exam (DCE) for 2026–2027 follow.

When you have successfully completed the required core courses, you may apply to take the DCE. **You must submit the request by September 1st or February 1st or May 1st of the semester in which you complete required coursework** (see forms in back of handbook). The purpose of the Examination is for you to demonstrate knowledge and your readiness to conduct dissertation research. The objectives of the written and oral examination are to assess your ability to:

1. Analyze, synthesize, and apply advanced knowledge;
2. Develop an independent, thoughtful analysis of questions; and
3. Present this analysis in an effective, cogent, and succinct form.

Procedures for Taking the DCE for 2026-2027

Your DCE committee will be composed of three members. Additional information on the DCE committee is provided in sections that follow. The first step is to complete a **Request to Take Doctor of Philosophy Candidacy Examination form** (see forms in back of handbook). When you complete the Request form, the Ph.D. Doctoral Program Director will complete an audit of your program of study and, if you have completed all the core courses in your program of study then the Program Director will grant approval for you to take the examination. The Program Director will also distribute specific information to you about the DCE process and to the DCE committee members. The chair of

the DCE is responsible for setting up a meeting with the student and other committee members to discuss their research topic/interest. The Chair of the DCE Committee is also responsible for completing and filing the **report of the DCE** for each student (see forms in back of handbook). Once this completed form is filed, you are required to be enrolled continuously for the remainder of the Ph.D. program. This also includes continuous enrollment in the summer semester.

Policies and Procedures for the DCE (for 2026-2027)

The DCE is to represent the student's own original work. Use of written resources such as notes, and a study guide are permitted and encouraged. Students will be provided with a broad study guide the semester prior to them taking the DCE. Any assistance from peers, faculty, family, or friends is not permitted.

DCE Guidelines (for 2026-2027)

1. During the last semester of required Ph.D. doctoral courses, but no later than September 1st (Fall semester) or February 1st (Spring semester), or May 1st (Summer semester) the student will complete a request to take the DCE. The DCE must be successfully completed prior to the initiation of the dissertation seminar courses.
2. In early September (for Fall semester) or early February (Spring semester), or early May (for Summer semester), the student will receive written guidance and a list of the committee members who will evaluate their written and oral response to the DCE components.
3. There are three possible outcomes of the written component of the DCE:
 1. Pass upon first attempt written portion of the DCE followed by an oral examination.
 2. Unsatisfactory grade of written portion of the DCE with retake opportunity; (i.e., a 2nd attempt is required).
 3. Unsatisfactory without retake (i.e., no attempt is allowed).

Pass upon first attempt: The three DCE committee members must reach consensus on whether the student met the criteria to proceed to the oral

component of the DCE. The DCE committee will communicate the results of the written exam to the student, the dissertation chair, and the Ph.D. program director within one week. This notification will indicate whether the student can proceed to the oral component of the DCE, has received an “unsatisfactory” with retake opportunity, or “unsatisfactory” without retake.

Unsatisfactory with retake opportunity: In the event of an “unsatisfactory” or “fail” first attempt in the written portion of the DCE, the student may re-apply to take the exam within one semester. For example, a student that fails the exam in the Spring semester must retake the exam by the next semester or Summer

semester. Students who are given this option to retake will meet with the DCE chair to create a plan to improve their knowledge base. If the student fails the second written attempt, dismissal from the program will be recommended.

In certain circumstances, a student may not successfully complete a specific portion of the DCE examination. In such cases, the DCE committee may determine that the student is eligible to retake only the portion identified as incomplete or unsatisfactory rather than repeating the entire examination. If a retake is approved, the student must complete the specified portion of the examination within one week of the committee’s decision. All components of the DCE process, including any approved retake, must be completed before the conclusion of the designated academic semester.

Unsatisfactory without retake opportunity: Students who fail the first attempt without an opportunity to retake will be recommended to be dismissed from the program. Students in this category can appeal the decision. If a student decides to appeal the decision, they must follow the following steps:

1. The student must email the Ph.D. Director to request an appeal as soon as the student becomes aware or within 48 hours after the students becomes aware of the decision made by the DCE committee.
2. The Ph.D. Director will review the decision made by the DCE committee and will proceed accordingly. If the student is granted the appeal, they will have one semester to retake the DCE, and a new DCE committee will be assembled.

DCE Committee Membership (for 2026–2027)

Each DCE committee will have three members, two of whom must be graduate faculty teaching in the College of Nursing Ph.D. program. The third member may be any faculty member in the College of Nursing who has a Ph.D. degree. The student's dissertation adviser cannot chair a student's DCE committee and will not serve as a member on the committee.

The Ph.D. Program Director will appoint the student's DCE committee chair and two additional members. The three-member committee will require the approval of the Ph.D. Council. Should the Ph.D. Program Director determine that a conflict exists in the committee membership, then the Director will suggest an alternative configuration of the committee members.

To assure integrity and consistency of the evaluation process, students are not permitted to request a change in the membership of the committee during the entire DCE process. The original committee members will be responsible for evaluating any repeated DCE. This does not pertain to those students that fall in the "unsatisfactory without retake" option. If the student appeals the decision of "unsatisfactory without retake" option and the appeal is granted, then a new DCE committee will be formed. If a faculty member becomes unavailable during this process, the Ph.D. Program Director will appoint a replacement. The student should meet with all DCE committee members during the semester to discuss their areas of interest and the timeline for the written and oral examinations.

The DCE (for 2026–2027)

The DCE consists of written and oral components. Each of the components are discussed below.

Written Component

The written component is a take home exam completed over two weeks or 14 calendar days this includes weekends and holidays. On the 14th day the student will email the final written product to all the DCE committee members. Students are allowed to use notes and textbooks. The DCE is to be the student's own work, and the student is not allowed to receive assistance from other individuals such as classmates, family members, or faculty. The written component of the DCE

examination must be completed and graded before the end of the semester.

1. The written component consists of multiple questions posed to the student by the DCE Committee. The examination questions should focus on the student's current research interest, including methodology, theoretical framework, and statistical approaches as they relate to the student's area of focus. Coursework-related questions are also appropriate. The composition of the questions is determined by the DCE committee. The student will receive all the questions on the first day of the exam via email. The day the student receives the questions counts as the first day or day one of the 14 days. The written component questions can also incorporate concepts that are foundational when developing a research protocol such as:
 - a. Introduction to the problem, documentation of its significance, and relationship to the health of individuals, groups, families, or communities;
 - b. Conceptual or theoretical underpinnings of the proposed study;
 - c. Methodological considerations;
 - d. Concept development and application to theory synthesis;
 - e. Policy analysis with application to public health;
 - f. Alternative analysis of methodologies and problems;
 - g. Ethical concerns in research;
 - h. Use of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches;
2. Written response to the questions should be typewritten, no more than 15 pages, double-spaced, and in 12-point font; it must conform to the APA format, professional version. The 15 pages are exclusive of references, figures, tables, and appendices.
3. Criteria for grading include: a) Depth of knowledge; b) Critical evaluation of knowledge; c) Synthesis of content; and d) Clarity in expression and logical development of ideas.

Oral Component

1. The oral exam will be one to two hours in length.
2. The oral exam must occur within one to two weeks after completion of the written component and before the end of the semester the exam occurs.
3. All faculty members that evaluate the written component of the

examination need to be present for the oral examination.

4. In the interim, between the written and oral exams, the student shall not be provided with evaluative feedback. The oral exam is viewed as an integral part of the process, and judgment as to overall performance and the final outcome should be withheld until the completion of the oral exam.
5. The intent of the oral component is to determine whether the student is adequately prepared and sufficiently intellectually independent to conduct doctoral-level research. Therefore, the oral component questions will cover the student's knowledge and understanding of theory, research methodology, methods, and data analysis. However, the oral exam is not confined to the topics covered in the written examination.
6. Questions may draw on knowledge acquired during the program that has relevance to the phenomenon of interest and its study. The oral component also tests the student's ability to be confident and skeptical, to discuss empirical and theoretical considerations in the proposed study, and to defend their own ideas, yet be open to alternatives.
7. The three DCE committee members must reach consensus on the exam outcome. If the student receives a grade of "unsatisfactory" on the examination, they must retake the oral DCE within two weeks. A meeting with the DCE chair should occur prior to the student retaking the oral examination to review the expectations of the DCE committee.

Recording Final grade of the DCE

Final outcomes of DCE will be one of the following:

- **Satisfactory:** The student must receive a grade of satisfactory on both the oral and written components to proceed to the dissertation phase. This decision is to be recorded as "satisfactory" on the Graduate School Report form.
- **Unsatisfactory:** If the student receives a grade of unsatisfactory, this decision is to be recorded as "unsatisfactory" on the Graduate School Report form.

Purpose of a Dissertation

A dissertation represents your first supervised, but independent, research

project. It allows you to demonstrate what you have learned, while receiving guidance and oversight from a faculty committee. Traditionally, a dissertation consists of five chapters, ranging from the introduction to conclusions.

For the PhD in Nursing Science program, we have modified this in keeping with current trends that emphasize publishing research. You will write the typical first three chapters (Introduction, Literature Review, & Research Methods) and this will constitute your dissertation proposal. In lieu of chapters reporting findings (typically chapter 4) and conclusions (chapter 5), you will develop and submit two publishable manuscripts. An abstract of these manuscripts must be submitted along with your updated proposal for your final dissertation.

When you enter doctoral candidacy, you are required to register for at least one dissertation hour every term, including summer, until the dissertation is completed. You must also register for Dissertation Seminar (one credit) for the first two semesters (Spring and Fall) or with permission until the proposal is defended. You are expected to be prepared and to schedule your proposal defense by the end of the second semester of Dissertation Seminar. In rare circumstances, a student may petition the Ph.D. Director for permission to register for a third semester. A total of eighteen hours of dissertation, including two credits of dissertation seminar, are required to graduate.

You will first select your dissertation chair. Your chair will help you select members of your dissertation committee. Each committee member should be carefully selected for his/her area of expertise. For example, you might select a member with experience in the research method you will use in your dissertation research or in the content area you will be pursuing. You must have a minimum of five members on your dissertation committee, one of whom must be an “outside member,” i.e. a faculty member outside of the CON or external to UAMS. You may have up to two committee members external to UAMS. A CV and request form for each external committee member must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School for review and approval. While it is possible to have more than five committee members, consult with your chair regarding the benefit verses challenges of additional committee members. It is possible to have an ‘ad hoc’ non-voting committee member who provides expertise or entrée for the proposed research.

General Area of Research Interest

It is helpful for you to identify an area of research interest as early as possible. Some of you will know your focus at the time you interview, and others will develop this interest during their early coursework. An advantage of selecting your research focus early is that course papers and projects can support your dissertation work

Dissertation Chair

The dissertation chairperson assumes primary responsibility for assisting you in all phases of the dissertation and serves as your major advisor. Consider your selection carefully, as you will work very closely with this faculty over a period of months. This individual must be a doctorally prepared graduate faculty member in the CON, with an appointment in the Graduate School, who meets the criteria to serve in this role. See Appendix C for a **list of faculty** currently qualified to serve as dissertation chairs. The dissertation chair must be competent to supervise the research as a whole; other faculty on the dissertation advisory committee will serve as resource persons for specific aspects of the study.

Early in the program of study, you should attempt to become acquainted with the entire graduate faculty in the CON. In consultation with the Ph.D. Program Director and your faculty mentor, you should select a dissertation chair that publishes, and preferably is funded, in your proposed area of research. It is helpful for you to obtain updated reports on the graduate faculty's areas of research interest and publications. When selecting a dissertation chair, you should also consider areas of expertise and personal style. The Director of the Ph.D. in Nursing Science program will consider factors such as faculty area of expertise, methodological experience, and workload equity when assisting you to select a chair. Once a dissertation chair is selected, students and the chair are encouraged to meet on a regular basis to facilitate progress on the dissertation.

Composition of Doctoral Dissertation Advisory Committee

The purpose of the committee is to guide your dissertation research and to provide the expertise needed for you to complete dissertation requirements. Expertise includes the areas of specific content, methodology, and data analysis. The dissertation chair will help you select, and must approve, all committee

members. The committee consists of the dissertation chair and a minimum of four additional members, two of whom must be from the College of Nursing. One member must come from outside the College of Nursing. If a committee member is outside of UAMS, please complete a **request for review** (see forms in back of handbook). The request must indicate that the individual will serve as a dissertation committee member but not as the chairperson of the dissertation. Be sure to indicate the area of expertise the outside member brings to the committee. Consult the Graduate School Handbook for requirements related to committee membership, and other important information. After selecting your dissertation chair and committee members, you will complete and submit the **Doctoral Advisory Committee Form** (see forms in back of handbook) to the Director of the Ph.D. in Nursing Science program, who will review and approve the committee members before forwarding it to the Dean of the Graduate School for approval.

In general, you should submit drafts of each chapter of the dissertation to all committee members for their comments and suggestions. **The entire dissertation committee is required to meet with the student at least one time each Fall and Spring semester to review your drafts, provide suggestions, and assess your progress.** A UAMS Graduate School **Student Advisory Committee Report** (see forms in back of handbook) will be signed by all committee members each time the committee meets to document student progress.

Change in Dissertation Chair

Either you or the dissertation committee chair may ask for a change in the chair. This is a serious decision and is generally made in consultation with the Director of the Ph.D. in nursing program. The need for a change may arise for a number of reasons, i.e. a faculty member may leave the College, you may change dissertation topics, or a serious problem occurs in the working relationship. A request to change dissertation chair must be formally submitted to the program director, who will then submit the request for approval to the Dean of the Graduate School. You will need to request any change on the **Doctoral Advisory Committee Form** (see forms in back of handbook).

Changes in Doctoral Dissertation Advisory Committee Membership

Changes in committee membership must be requested by the Dissertation Chair and the student. Please complete the request on the **Doctoral Advisory Committee Form** (see forms in back handbook). Submit the request to the Director of the Ph.D. in Nursing program for signature, who will then send it to the Dean of the Graduate School for approval.

Dissertation Seminar (NURS 6200V)

When you enter candidacy, you are required to participate in a monthly dissertation seminar for a minimum of two semesters. These semesters count one credit each toward your 18 dissertation hours, and are graded pass/fail, based on meeting specific requirements.

Doctoral Dissertation (NURS 6203V)

After completing the two dissertation seminar courses you will enroll in the Doctoral Dissertation course until you have defended your dissertation proposal. Student attendance in this course is optional, its goal is to ensure you continue to progress through the dissertation phase plus it provides an opportunity have contact with the other students in the PhD program.

Developing the Proposal

Your dissertation proposal will guide you as you conduct your dissertation. In essence, it provides the background and blueprint for your study and serves as a contract for the scope of work to be conducted. You will develop your proposal with the guidance and support of your dissertation chair and your committee.

The proposal should include the introduction of the problem (Chapter 1), the review of related literature (Chapter 2), and a detailed methodological plan for your study (Chapter 3) (see Appendix D.) Preferences regarding the format of the dissertation proposal may vary with the committee members, so it is important that you understand your committee members' expectations.

While developing the proposal, it is not necessary for you to consult committee members equally about each aspect of the problem and design. However, it is highly recommended that you consult with members about aspects

directly related to their areas of special competence. Additional faculty or resource persons may be consulted as needed. It is your joint responsibility, with your dissertation chair, to make decisions on the research design and methodology, even if decisions are made that one or more committee members believe to be less than optimal.

The committee's responsibility is to act in an advisory capacity, rather than as directors of the research. However, they must support the agreed-upon proposal when providing advice during the research stage. The dissertation chair is responsible for resolving significant differences of opinion among committee members.

Proposal Defense and Approval

The student arranges a committee meeting (up to two hours in length) to discuss the written proposal and gain approval for the study. The proposal meeting should be scheduled when all members are available. **The student is responsible for arranging the proposal defense and distributing electronic copies of the proposal at least ten working days before the meeting. This time frame is required, so do not request an exception.** Refer to Appendix D to guide the development of your dissertation proposal. The dissertation chair will conduct the session.

The proposal defense should be viewed as a working session in which differences of opinion are resolved. It is a good idea to audiotape the session, or to take careful notes on the issues raised and decisions reached during the proposal defense. Your committee members' suggestions are intended to ensure the study's feasibility and quality. Your Chair will write a summary of your committee's recommendations for change and send them to you and your committee members. You will make these changes in your proposal and ask your Chair and Committee to approve the revisions before you develop and submit your research protocol to the UAMS Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Documentation of Successful Proposal Defense

After successful defense of the dissertation proposal, it is the student's responsibility to complete the dissertation proposal defense form with requested signatures and file this form with the Program Director (see forms in back of

handbook).

Conducting the Dissertation Research

After your dissertation committee has approved your proposal, you must obtain appropriate institutional committee approvals before beginning the study. If your dissertation research involves human subjects, the UAMS IRB must approve the study before you can begin. Other approvals may also be required, depending upon where the dissertation research will be conducted and/or the research procedures being used. Information about the IRB is available at irb.uams.edu. It may take six weeks to have your proposal reviewed by the IRB, and it is not unusual to need to make changes requested by the IRB. There are templates on the IRB website to assist you in developing your consent forms and protocol.

If the study is to be conducted in a setting outside of UAMS, please consult with the UAMS IRB to determine whether IRB approvals from those settings need to be obtained and included with your UAMS IRB materials. The schedule and deadlines for submitting materials to the IRB can be found at:

http://irb.uams.edu/about_us/full-board_meetings/

The CON has secured some gift cards for PhD in Nursing Science students to use as a research incentive for subjects participating in your dissertation research. Any research incentive participation must be incorporated into the IRB proposal. A copy of the gift card request form and protocol is available in the Blackboard course shell of NURS 6203V: Doctoral Dissertation. Following IRB approval of the dissertation study, students may apply for the Corinne George Dissertation grant in the fall and spring semester to support their dissertation research.

The Dissertation Defense and Dissemination Process

As you finalize your study and prepare for graduation, you will address three separate components: a pre-defense meeting, the final defense, and the preparation and submission of the written documents. These activities typically take place in the last semester before graduation. Make sure you allow adequate time to go through these processes! **Check the current semester due dates for final defense and submission of dissertation to the library** (see forms in back

of handbook). You will develop a specific timeline with your dissertation chair. Please refer to guidelines on the latest dates to complete the various steps. **The student is responsible for distributing electronic copies of the dissertation and manuscripts at least ten working days before the pre and final defense.** Committee members need time to carefully read and review your dissertation.

Pre-Defense meeting

A pre-defense meeting of the entire Committee is scheduled to review the first three chapters and manuscripts that you have developed, and to plan your final defense. In most cases, dissertation committee members provide considerable feedback on your manuscripts at this meeting. This meeting is a time to discuss your findings, prepare for the final defense, and receive assistance in revising manuscripts to increase the chance of being published. Please use the **Pre-Defense Meeting Checklist** (see forms in back of handbook) to determine if you are ready to schedule this meeting. **Obtain approval from your chair before scheduling this meeting. In some cases, your committee may decide to schedule an additional pre-defense meeting to review the dissertation and manuscripts after additional work is done. You are responsible for distributing an electronic copy of your work to each member ten working days prior to the pre-defense meeting.** You should also consult with your Dissertation Chair prior to the pre-defense meeting for any additional materials (e.g., statistical analyses printouts, PowerPoint slides) to be brought or prepared for Committee review during the meeting. Expect to present a brief summary to your committee. This PowerPoint presentation usually lasts about 30 – 40 minutes.

Technical Requirements in Writing the Dissertation

The CON requires that dissertations be written according to the latest edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association, Washington, DC). The current edition of the APA publication manual serves as the official guide for papers and scholarly works for both faculty and students in the CON. Students are held accountable for following these guidelines in scholarly works/papers for grading and academic honesty. The two manuscripts must follow the specific reference and format guidelines for the selected professional journals.

Guidance in Developing Dissertation Manuscripts

To meet the goal for dissemination and/or extension of dissertation research findings, the following types of manuscripts are considered acceptable to meet the intent and purpose.

1. Manuscripts that include data/research findings from the study.
2. Manuscripts that address research-related issues encountered in carrying out the study, i.e., consent issues, recruitment discoveries, or methodological aspects of study that fill a void in existing literature.
3. A submitted major research proposal on a related research question or that extends the findings that are deemed fundable by a regional or national professional organization.

All students must develop a manuscript as described in “1” above. The second “manuscript” may be a “1,” “2,” or “3” that is approved by the entire dissertation committee.

Final Defense

Once you have completed your study, you will present and defend your findings to your committee, professional colleagues, and the community. See forms in back of handbook for an **overview checklist of the dissertation process**. You will arrange a date and time (approximately two hours) that is satisfactory to all committee members for the final defense of the dissertation. See forms at back of handbook to request final defense arrangements.

You are responsible for obtaining approval from your chair before scheduling this meeting. See program due date forms and pre-defense student checklist in back of handbook) for general guidelines. You are also responsible for coordinating with the Ph.D. program administrative assistant at least 30 days prior anticipated defense date to schedule the meeting. You must submit the entire dissertation (the first three chapters, the abstract, and two manuscripts, including the submission and formatting guidelines for the selected journals), with appropriate references, to your committee **ten working days** before the final defense.

Your dissertation chair will provide definitive guidance and review your Power Point slides as you prepare for your dissertation defense. The following information provides general guidelines to ensure that you meet expectations. Please note that we encourage you to attend defense meetings of other students, as they are open to the public, and will help to demystify the process for you. An email notification of all Dissertation Defenses is sent to CON Student and Faculty distribution groups, so that they may attend research presentations of interest. A notice is also distributed campus-wide by the graduate school.

We encourage you to practice presenting your defense at your pre-defense meeting. It is useful to consider your presentation as similar to a research presentation at a national meeting. Use Power Point slides to aid your presentation. Make sure you utilize spell check and grammar check on the slides. Add references where indicated.

Please address the following in an organized and coherent manner:

- Research question
- Rationale and significance of study
- Conceptual framework
- Methods, including research design, sample, procedures
- Findings
- Present your findings in terms of your manuscripts.
- Indicate the journal where you are submitting your manuscripts, and then describe your sample and discuss other findings, limitations, and implications. This should include the theoretical approach, implications for nursing research, education, policy, and/or practice.

The total dissertation defense meeting should last approximately one to two hours (30–40 minutes to present and 40 minutes for questions and discussion). The faculty and attendees may ask questions regarding any aspect of the presentation, and the student is expected to answer the queries. Some of these questions may be asked at the pre-defense meeting. The Graduate School provides refreshments.

You will be excused from the room while the committee evaluates the defense and makes its decision. The dissertation chair will then invite the student

in and verbally inform the student of the committee's decision. The decision may include additional required changes in the dissertation or manuscripts. Committee members may elect to sign off or wait to see the changes. The chair will not sign until you have made all changes and provided proof that you have submitted the manuscripts for publication.

Documentation of submission and a copy of each of your two dissertation-based manuscripts/grant proposal need to be submitted to the Director of the Ph.D. in Nursing Science program via email or in person. (See forms in back of handbook.)

If you do not pass the defense, your dissertation committee will develop a plan of action for you to follow prior to scheduling another dissertation defense.

Please refer to Thesis and Dissertation Preparation

<https://gradschool.uams.edu/current-students/dissertation-and-thesis-preparation/thesis-and-dissertation-preparation-regulations-for-preparing-theses-and-dissertations> for specific regulations.

Dissertation Format and Approval

The Graduate School regulations regarding the preparation and submission of the dissertation and or thesis can be found at the following link.

<https://gradschool.uams.edu/current-students/dissertation-and-thesis-preparation/thesis-and-dissertation-preparation-regulations-for-preparing-theses-and-dissertations>

The dissertation chair will review the dissertation for conformity to the Graduate School's Regulations for Preparing Theses and Dissertations. The dissertation should be emailed to the UAMS Library Administrative Office no later than ten business days before the degree is to be granted (see Academic Calendar for due dates). Documents to be submitted to the Library include: electronic version of the complete dissertation in Adobe PDF format; completed e-filing form; and Committee Signature Page. The Library reviews the documents to verify completion and appropriate formatting. Following this review and approval, the Graduate School Department Administrative Staff (Dr.

Prince) confirms all required documents have been received and routes a formal email confirming the thesis/ dissertation is officially approved as filed. This serves as the official time/date for graduation and degree conferral. Library saves the e-dissertation to its thesis/ dissertation repository to complete the formal filing of the document.

One PDF copy of the entire document (including abstract, signature pages, and complete dissertation) must be uploaded to ProQuest within two business days of submitting the dissertation to the UAMS Library. Your timeline must ensure that two final copies of the dissertation, together with two copies of a “dissertation abstract” of not more than 350 words, are submitted to the library for approval ten working days before the degree is conferred.

An overall summary abstract for the entire study, not to exceed 350 words, is required by the Graduate School to be placed at the beginning of the dissertation. The dissertation abstract should address the Introduction/Purpose, Background, Methods, Results, and Discussion/Conclusion. Findings and implications are typically covered in chapters 4 and 5, which we do not require in the Nursing Science Ph.D. dissertation, so there is a need to document findings somewhere without violating future copyright agreements. A brief summary of each manuscript is generally included.

The actual manuscripts that are submitted for publication are not included with the dissertation. Please go to the Graduate School website to find specific instructions for dissertation preparation. You may find instructions under <https://gradschool.uams.edu/current-students/dissertation-and-thesis-preparation/thesis-and-dissertation-preparation-regulations-for-preparing-theses-and-dissertations>

When you submit chapters 1–3 and the abstract to the library, it is mandatory that your documents are in compliance with specific guidelines provided at this website.

All signatures on final copies and abstracts must be originals. Once the copies are turned into the library, obtain graduation clearance instructions from the Graduate School: <https://gradschool.uams.edu/current-students/graduating-students/graduate-school-graduation-clearance-requirements>

Tips from the Trenches

All communication concerning the conduct of your dissertation should flow between you and your dissertation chair. Inform your chair when you have discussions with other committee members. Together, you and your dissertation chair will set a timeline for proposal preparation, completion of pilot work if required, and meeting objectives for each semester of dissertation work. Your chair will supervise your application for IRB approval of your study. Before you submit your materials, you must demonstrate that you have been trained in the ethical conduct of research.

To do the online training and receive a certificate for protection of human subjects in research, please go to <https://research.uams.edu/research-compliance/compliance-education-program/human-subject-protection-training-citi/> and access the online Human Subjects Protection (CITI) training.

It is important that you obtain approval from your dissertation chair before setting the date for your proposal defense and before circulating any drafts or final copy of the proposal to committee members.

Funding

We suggest that you seek funding for your dissertation research. Funding will not only help defray research expenses, but it will also provide valuable opportunities to learn about the process of obtaining research support. Please consult your dissertation chair to assist you in identifying potential funding sources, such as local chapters of Sigma Theta International. Depending on budgetary constraints, students may apply for funding from the UAMS Graduate School to help defray study-related costs.

You are highly encouraged to explore research funding opportunities early in your program of study. Federal government and private organization funding opportunities are available. See <https://researchtraining.nih.gov/career/graduate> for information on federal funding opportunities for doctoral students.

For all requests for research funding, you will need to complete a notification form. You can obtain this form from the Ph.D. Director. For further information, see student research funds:

<http://gradschool.uams.edu/students/fellowships-grants-travel-awards-for-graduate-students/>. Please notify the Director of the Ph.D. in Nursing Science program if you receive funding.

Dissertation Data Guidelines

The dissertation research may involve original research, secondary analysis of a faculty member's existing database, secondary analysis of an existing large database outside the CON, or a joint study involving a faculty member or researcher. If you conduct a secondary data analysis, you will need to develop original research questions, use a conceptual framework or model, and develop a detailed data analysis plan.

Ownership of Data/Authorship of Published Manuscript Guidelines

Original Research: The ownership of data originating from a student's original research rests with the student. However, it is expected that faculty who serve on your dissertation committee will be co-author any of the publications evolving from the research. There are two reasons that this is important professionally:

1. Faculty devote considerable time and effort to guide you through the dissertation process. Many manuscripts are returned for changes after submission, and faculty assist with reviewing these changes, after graduation, you will be carrying out research and publishing as part of a team, and it is expected that each person assisting with the actual research and writing for a study will be listed as a co-author for any publications.
2. It is to your benefit to demonstrate that you have collaborated and published with a team of scientists. This will be especially beneficial later in your career when you are applying for grant funding.

Secondary Data Analysis

Whoever originally plans and implements a study maintains ownership of the data unless a written agreement to the contrary is negotiated prior to the student initiating dissertation proposal development.

If a secondary analysis is conducted, the owner of the data has the right to be a co-author on publications emanating from the data set in addition to the Dissertation Committee. A student performing a secondary analysis must be first author on the two required dissertation publications. To avoid confusion and conflict later, if additional publications are forthcoming from the secondary analysis, ranking of authorship must be negotiated and preferably put in writing prior to the initiation of manuscripts.

If you undertake a joint project or secondary analysis as dissertation research, it is the responsibility of the dissertation chair to ensure that you have experience in preparation of a Human Subjects Review application and data collection. This experience may be incorporated as an independent study or while working as a research assistant with faculty at other sites, etc. The experience should occur while you are in the Ph.D. doctoral program to ensure that the experience reflects current protocols, especially human subjects' concerns.

Although the owner of the data may be listed as a co-author on dissertation publications, the owner may not write any portion of the manuscript since publications are the outcome of the student's dissertation work and must be evaluated by the dissertation committee.

In the event the student does not publish the secondary analysis within a three-year time frame after graduation, the right to publish reverts to the owner of the data, but the owner may not publish the original work of the student without the student's written permission.

Joint Research:

This occurs when the student and faculty together plan the study, mix resources, use the same participants for data collection, and/or combine the results for analysis. However, as stated earlier, the student must develop original research questions and analyze the resulting data separately to produce two original manuscripts derived from the implementation of the research methodology or theoretical framework supported with findings from the research. Ownership of the data should be negotiated before the student begins the proposal process.

It is recommended that if the faculty member contributes significant

resources to the research process, the faculty member should be co-author on the required two publications. Other guidelines under secondary analysis also apply to authorship, failure to publish, etc.

Graduation

During registration of the semester in which you plan to graduate, complete the **Degree Application Form** online at <https://gradschool.uams.edu/current-students/graduating-students> (see forms in back of handbook). Also, remember to clear campus by completing the Campus Clearance form, downloadable from the same website.

Withdrawal Policy from UAMS Graduate School

If you leave the University voluntarily before the end of a semester or summer term, you must file, and have accepted by the Graduate School registrar, a **Petition for Withdrawal from Registration** by completing the online form found at this website: <https://registrar.uams.edu/our-forms/> (see forms in back of handbook). You may also request to take a leave of absence for extenuating circumstances. Discuss either leave of absence or withdrawal decision with the Ph.D. Director before completing any form. The registration/change deadlines for dropping courses apply to withdrawal as well. Students who fail to withdraw officially will receive “Fs” in the classes for which they are registered but which they fail to complete. All students who withdraw from the Graduate School must complete this process. Failure to complete the process will result in the inability to receive an official transcript.

ACADEMIC DISMISSAL

A student may be dropped from further study and dismissed from the Graduate School by the Dean of the Graduate School if at any time his/her performance is considered unsatisfactory as determined by the program faculty. Academic dishonesty (including cheating, plagiarism, and forgery, or use of an artificial intelligence [Academic Affairs policy 2.1.6]) and/or failure to maintain a specified cumulative grade-point average are both considered unsatisfactory performance. If a degree seeking graduate student has less than a 2.85 cumulative grade-point average on 9 or more semester credit hours of course work applicable to a graduate degree program, the student will be placed on academic probation.

The student will be dismissed from the Graduate School if the cumulative GPA is not raised to 2.85 or above on the next nine hours of graduate course work approved by the student's program. If at the time a student is placed on academic probation, it is mathematically impossible for the student to raise their GPA to 2.85 on the next nine hours of graduate coursework, the student will be dismissed from the Graduate School. The graduate faculty of any degree program may establish and state in writing additional requirements for continuation in that program.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX (A)

BSN-PhD (Full Time—Fall Start)

Sample Plan of Study

Minimum of 81 credits. plus a minimum of 6 credits of electives, 16 credits of dissertation and 2 credits of dissertation seminar. Electives provide content or methodological expertise. There are four courses (12 credits) of educational courses that can be taken as electives if desired.		
FALL 1	Credits	Term Completed
BIOS 50133: Biostatistics I	3	
BIOS 51131 Computing with R1	1	
NURS 71052: Theoretical Foundations for Advanced Nursing Practice & Research	3	
NURS 51003: Research Methodology	3	
TOTAL	10	
SPRING 1		
BIOS 52103: Biostatistics II	3	
BIOS 52001 Computing with R2	1	
NURS 61033: Qualitative Research Methodology	3	
	3	
TOTAL	10	
SUMMER 1		
NURS 53903: Human Genetics-elective only	3	
NURS 61183: A Culture of Health Approach to Research	3	
OR NURS 61052: Issues Influencing Research	2	
TOTAL	5–8	
FALL 2		
NURS 71133: Healthcare Informatics	3	
NURS 61193: Philosophies & Theory in Science & Research	3	
NURS 61043: Quantitative Methodology in Nursing Research	3	
TOTAL	9	
SPRING 2		
ELECTIVE: HPMT 51053: Introduction to Health Economics	3	
NURS 61143: Synthesizing the Literature	3	
NURS 62103: Leadership in Healthcare Systems or **NURS 71173: Leadership in Health Policy & Advocacy	3	
NURS 62171: Research Practicum (OR Fall 3)	1	
TOTAL	9–10	
SUMMER 2		
NURS 61183: Culture of Health	3	
OR NURS 61052: Issues Influencing Research	2	
NURS 61161: Leadership in Healthcare Systems Field Experience	1	
NURS 52063: Quantitative Epidemiology (take in Spring 2 if not taking HPMT 51053)	3	
TOTAL	3–9	

***The NUR 71173 Leadership in Health Policy & Advocacy is a DNP course for now it will be used as a substitute for*

the Leadership in Healthcare Systems (NURS 62103).

CONTINUED →

FALL 3		
NURS 62153: Grant Writing and Development	3	
ELECTIVE: NURS 61083: Qualitative Data Analysis	3	
OR OTHER ELECTIVE: Topics or Other	2-3	
NURS 62171: Research Practicum	1	
TAKE Doctoral Candidacy Exam (DCE)		
TOTAL	9–12	
SPRING 3		
NURS 6200V: Dissertation Seminar	1	
NURS 6203V: Doctoral Dissertation [16 dissertation hours total for degree]	2 or more	
TOTAL	1 to 6	
SUMMER 3		
NURS 6203V: Doctoral Dissertation	1-	
TOTAL	1	
FALL 4		
NURS 6200V: Dissertation Seminar	1	
NURS 6203V: Doctoral Dissertation	2 or more	
TOTAL	1 to 5	
Thereafter each semester takes NURS 6203V Dissertation until dissertation research completed and defended		

MNSc-PhD (Part Time—Fall Start) Sample Plan of Study

Minimum of 60 credits beyond the master's degree and includes both required and elective courses. Additional electives can be taken to provide content or methodological expertise. A minimum of 16 credit hours of dissertation and 2 credit hours of dissertation seminar are required.		
FALL 1	Credits	Term Completed
BIOS 50133: Biostatistics I	3	
BIOS 51131 Computing with R1	1	
NURS 61193: Philosophies & Theory in Science & Research	3	
TOTAL	7	
SPRING 1		
BIOS 52103: Biostatistics II	3	
BIOS 52001 Computing with R2	1	
NURS 61033: Qualitative Research Methodology	3	
TOTAL	7	
SUMMER 1		
NURS 61183: A Culture of Health Approach to Research	3	
OR NURS 61052: Issues Influencing Research (offered alternate years)	2	
NURS 52063: Quantitative Epidemiology (if not taken in MNSc program)	3	
OR OTHER ELECTIVE: Topics or NURS 53903: Human Genetics	1-3	
TOTAL	3-6	
FALL 2		
NURS 61043: Quantitative Methodology in Nursing Research	3	
ELECTIVE: NURS 61083: Qualitative Data Analysis	3	
OR OTHER ELECTIVE: Topics or Other	3	
TOTAL	6	
SPRING 2		
NURS 61143: Synthesizing the Literature	3	
NURS 62103: Leadership in Healthcare Systems	3	
TOTAL	6	
SUMMER 2		
NURS 61183: A Culture of Health Approach to Research	3	
OR NURS 61052: Issues Influencing Research (offered alternate years)	2	
OR Elective: NURS 53903: Human Genetics or TOPICS in Nursing	3	
OR OTHER ELECTIVE: Topics or Other	1-3	
NURS 61161: Leadership in Healthcare Systems Field Experience	1	
TOTAL	3-7	
FALL 3		
NURS 62153: Grant Writing and Development	3	
NURS 62171: Research Practicum (or Summer 2)	1	
OR OTHER ELECTIVE: Topics or Other	2-3	
TAKE DCE		
TOTAL	6-7	

CONTINUED →

SPRING 3		
NURS 6200V: Doctoral Dissertation Seminar	1	
NURS 6203V: Doctoral Dissertation [16 dissertation hours total for degree]	2-3	
TOTAL	3-4	
SUMMER 3		
NURS 6203V: Doctoral Dissertation	3-4	
TOTAL	3-4	
FALL 4		
NURS 6200V: Doctoral Dissertation Seminar	1	
NURS 6203V: Doctoral Dissertation	2-4	
TOTAL	3-5	
SPRING 4		
NURS 6203V: Doctoral Dissertation	3-5	
TOTAL	3-5	
SUMMER 4		
NURS 6203V: Doctoral Dissertation	2-4	
TOTAL	2-4	

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES COLLEGE OF NURSING

Guidelines for Topics in Nursing

NPHD 6113V: TOPICS IN NURSING 1-6

Discussion and advanced study on selected topics not covered in general courses. The student may repeat up to a maximum of 6 credit hours. Prerequisite: Consent.

Topic in Nursing allows students to pursue a topic relevant to their research career goals. Topic in Nursing are distinguished from Independent Study opportunities in that the titles of the Topic in Nursing are listed on the students' transcripts and the faculty are more likely, but not necessarily, to have a pre-existing series of readings and activities available for the student. Topic in Nursing can include, but are not limited to, opportunities to expand the student's knowledge base on a specific topic of interest to the student, such as:

- A specialty area, such as the nursing care of gerontologic, pediatric, forensic, or other patient populations.
- A research area, such as research with women and heart disease, or disordered sleep, or pain.
- A phase of the research process, such as the ethical conduct of research as regulated by institutional review boards.
- A methodologic process, such as an in-depth exploration of a statistical method or interview procedure.

The credits can range from 1-6 and effort is expected to reflect proportionate credit the same as in structured courses. Typically, students will not take more than 6 credits of Topics in Nursing throughout their Ph.D. doctoral program. The request to take a required course at a time other than the annual scheduled course is not adequate rationale for a special topic. Preparation of a poster or oral presentation, by itself, does not meet the intent of Topic in Nursing although these may appropriate products of the course. A student that is required to come in contact with a patient/family during the course must have *student* malpractice insurance and current CPR certification to accompany their registration forms and these are required to be submitted at the time of registration.

GUIDELINES

Learning objectives and achievable goals are to be developed jointly between the student and faculty member who is directing the work. Credit hours are negotiated at that time and reflect the planned scope of the work and intended products. The Topic in Nursing Agreement Form must be completed and signed by the student and faculty and placed in the student's permanent record at the beginning of the course. A grade of incomplete may be filed at the end of the course if the student has not met the designated outcome criteria. The incomplete is treated the same as an incomplete in a formally developed course, with the same requirements and restrictions.

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES COLLEGE OF NURSING

Qualifications for Dissertation Chairperson

Dissertation Committee Chair (Must have all the following qualifications)

1. Ph.D. or comparable doctoral degree.
2. Graduate Faculty Appointment by the Graduate School.
3. Service on two dissertation committees
 - a. At least one must be completed
 - b. One may be in progress
4. At least two recent data-based publications (one may be in press).
5. Approval of the Ph.D. Program Director and Dean of the Graduate School.

Faculty Approved to Chair Dissertation Committees

CHAIRS
Dr. Claudia Barone
Dr. Laura Hays
Dr. Corey Nagel
Dr. Pearman Parker
Dr. Martha Rojo
Dr. Nickolas Zaller

CO-CHAIRS
Dr. Jocelyn Anderson
Dr. Brini Ayers

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APPENDIX D

Components of a Dissertation

Note: Much of the following information was taken from

- Cone, J. D., & Foster, S. L. (1993). *Dissertations and theses from start to finish: Psychology and related fields*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

This provides general guidelines. Your chair and dissertation committee may modify so check with the research specific chapter content.

Chapter 1: The Introduction

This is a relatively short chapter that introduces your reader to the topic, overview, and research problem of your dissertation. The introduction also includes the hypothesis or research problem statement and should briefly introduce your conceptual framework, as well as key concepts and assumptions. The philosophical approach to the question should also briefly be addressed. Try to present sufficient information to your reader so that they understand the research question, its importance, and how the conceptual framework guides the study to answer your questions. However, do not give so much information that your second chapter, the literature review, becomes redundant.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter summarizes an extensive search of the existing literature, providing a critical and integrative review of it. To write this section, you should use the “funnel” approach: Begin discussing the general literature of your topic area and gradually narrow the focus to the specific area of content addressed by your research question.

It should be obvious to your reader why your study needs to be completed. This section should include a summary of what is known and what is unknown in relation to your problem and conclude with how your study contributes to filling the identified gap in the literature. You should also include a section on research using your conceptual framework that supports that this model is appropriate to study your problem and selected concepts/variables.

It should be noted that your proposal should contain the full literature review you plan to include in the final draft of your dissertation. (of course, you may add a few articles to the final literature review that were published between the time of your proposal and the conclusion of your study). There are several reasons why you should avoid submitting a brief overview of the literature in your proposal. First, a complete review of the literature allows you to be confident that your dissertation topic addresses a need in the field of research. You do not want to work for months on a project that has already been completed by another researcher. Secondly, a detailed review of the literature acquaints you with procedural and design details of your research topic. By thoroughly reviewing the existing literature, you may avoid mistakes that others have made before you. Actually, writing this section for your proposal will force you to think through the details of your project in more depth than simply reading the literature and writing a brief overview. Finally, you have to write this chapter for your final project anyway. If you do it now, your project is half over!

Locating relevant literature should build upon all of the literature search techniques from the NURS 61143: *Synthesizing the Literature* course. A brief summary is included, but you should review your course notes for a complete strategy for searching and accessing pertinent documents. Use computerized literature searches. Be sure to include searches of several different databases. For example, don't just search Medline; also include a search of *PsycLit*, *PsychoINFO*, or *CINAHL*. In addition, the Internet may hold valuable resources. You may also scan the table of contents of relevant journals and check the reference lists from relevant articles. Review articles often provide another excellent literature source. Avoid using secondary sources (NOTE: do not use someone else's interpretation of an article; look it up and read it for yourself!) and the popular press (e.g., newspapers and popular magazines, such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, or *People*).

Once you've critically read the literature, it's time to start writing! Be sure you know the length and format requirements for UAMS. Then begin by organizing your articles and writing an outline. Be sure to introduce your study and your hypothesis following your critical analysis of the literature.

In chapter 2, it is wise to use sub-headings to assist the reader in recognizing how you have organized the review. You should have a sub-heading for each

major concept. At the start of chapter 2, you can also introduce the order that you will be using. The rationale should be in chapter 1 and the research using the framework in chapter 2. Any preliminary research that you have done on this topic should be included in Chapter 2 also.

Chapter 3: Methods

In the proposed methodology for your study, you describe how you plan to carry out your study. The important thing to remember when writing this section is the goal of replicability. Anyone who reads this chapter should be able to replicate your study. Also, remember that while *you* may know exactly how you are going to perform the study, your reader knows nothing about your intentions. Make certain the organization and presentation of the material are clear. Remember that this section, as well as chapters 1 and 2 of the dissertation, is written in future tense since it is what is proposed at this point. Once you have completed the study, revise to past tense, and add any changes you encountered when implementing your study.

The basic components of the methods section are research design, sample/ participants, instrumentation, and procedures, including human subjects, protection, and data analysis. However, it may be necessary to add other subsections depending on your study. For example, you may need to devote subsections to design, independent variables, and/or dependent variables. Remember that you need to cite references in this section to support your choice of sampling, procedures, analyses, etc.

Typically, in chapter 3 the author lists assumptions that are made about participants, measures selected, a statistical analysis plan, etc. in the study. In addition, limitations of the methods should also be clearly identified.

The Manuscripts (In Lieu of Chapters 4 and 5)

The UAMS College of Nursing requires two completed, publishable manuscripts in place of chapters 4 and 5. The following information should be useful to you as you develop your manuscripts. Once you have completed your project, you should update the first three chapters. These materials must be approved by your dissertation committee along with your manuscripts. Only the

first three chapters and abstract are to be turned into the library along with a brief summary of your manuscript as your final product for dissertation since copyright issues prevent you from having your entire manuscripts in dissertation and published in a journal. Your manuscripts are to be submitted for publication as a requirement for completing the dissertation.

Manuscript Results

In this section of your manuscript, you report the major data related to your hypothesis. Present data that is important to your study and avoid including interesting but tangential results.

You may want to begin this section by restating the principal hypotheses. In order of importance, address the data used to test each hypothesis and discuss the relevant statistical analyses. If you have multiple hypotheses with multiple dependent measures, you may want to use subheadings. Address a different hypothesis under each subheading.

Remember to conform to the conventions of APA statistical presentation. Your reader should not be sidetracked by trying to decipher a creative code you have developed for reporting your statistics. In general, present the symbol of the statistic followed by the degrees of freedom (e.g., $F [1, 29]$), then the value of the statistic (e.g., 5.78), and finally the probability levels (e.g., $p < .05$). In addition, tables are often very useful for presenting a large amount of data. Again, remember the reader. Make the table easy-to-read as well as informative.

Manuscript Discussion

Individuals are often confused about what to include in this section of a manuscript. They may feel that they have already stated everything a reader needs to know about the study. However, findings still need to be *discussed*. What was the implication of your findings upon your hypothesis? What were the limitations of your study?

Begin this section by summarizing your results. Do not restate the actual numbers that reported in the previous section. Use as little statistical jargon as possible. Consider whether a layperson could understand your statements. For example, do not report significant effects; instead state how your variables affect

your participants (e.g., “Cats who had chicken meat juice added to their food ate more food than cats that did not have chicken meat juice added”).

Secondly, interpret your findings. What do the results mean? What do the results tell us about the relationship between the independent and dependent variables? Following the interpretation of the findings, place your study within the context of the literature.

Does your study contradict findings from prior literature, or does it converge with prior findings? If so, how do your findings extend the research knowledge base? Next, consider what implications your findings have. How should your findings alter the way individuals think about the issues you have researched? What are the implications of your research to theory, other research and practice? How do your findings link to your theoretical framework?

Include a subsection on the limitations of your study. What limitations occurred because of the decisions made on how to conduct the study? What limitations arose while the study was being conducted? Think about internal problems (design) and external problems (things that could not be controlled for). Note any measurement or statistical limitations.

Finally, comment on future research. What are your recommendations for where research needs to head? Tell other researchers what questions were raised during your study and what issues they could examine, given your findings.

References

References should be listed at the end. Include all publications, including Internet websites, cited in writing your dissertation. Do not list articles you read but did not cite. Use the current edition of the *APA Publication Manual* to write your reference section. It is highly recommended that you use a citation database (such as, EndNote, Mendeley, or Zotero).

Appendices

Appendix sections are a place to include any extra details that might be useful to someone trying to replicate your study or for committee members trying to ensure that your study was completed in an ethical manner. This might include such items as instructions to participants, consent forms, or non-copyrighted data collection instruments. Place these items in the order that the reader encounters them reading your dissertation. Each piece of information should be labeled under a different heading. For example, your consent form might be (**Appendix A**), the instructions to the participants might be (**Appendix B**), and the data collection instrument might be (**Appendix C**).

Graduate School & CON Links & Forms

Helpful Forms/Links	
GS Calendar	Click Here: GS Academic Calendar: https://registrar.uams.edu/academic_calendar/
Graduate School Handbook	https://gradschool.uams.edu/students/graduate-school-handbook/
Academic Catalog	https://registrar.uams.edu/academic-catalog/
Add/Drop/Withdrawal	Student completes form and submits to PhD Director & Assistant. Student needs to obtain appropriate signatures. https://registrar.uams.edu/our-forms/
Leave of Absence Request	Student completes form and submits to PhD Director & Assistant https://registrar.uams.edu/our-forms/
Advisory Committee Meeting	Student completes form obtaining appropriate signatures each semester and return to PhD Director & Assistant. Click here: GS Advisory Committee Report
DCE Candidacy Exam	DCE Chair submits examination results to the PhD Director & Assistant immediately following DCE exam.
Registrar Information	Resources 501-526-5600 Registrar@uams.edu https://registrar.uams.edu/our-forms/
Dissertation Forms	
Dissertation Advisory Committee Members	Student completes form and submits to PhD Director & Assistant. Click Here: Dissertation Committee Members
Dissertation Advisory Outside Member	Student completes form attaching the outside member's CV. Submit to PhD Director & Assistant. Click Here: Dissertation Outside Member
Dissertation Deadlines	Important dates in planning student's final defense. Click Here: Deadlines
Dissertation Proposal	Chair completes form and submits to PhD Director & Assistant. Click Here: Dissertation Proposal
Pre-Dissertation Defense Checklist	Student checklist: Click here: Pre-defense student checklist
Pre-Defense	Chair completes form and submits to PhD Director and Assistant. Dissertation Pre-Defense
Degree Application	Student submits form to the Graduate School. This form should be completed during registration for the semester in which degree requirements will be completed Click Here: Degree Application
Dissertation Final Defense Student Checklist	Student checklist: Click here: Final Defense Student Checklist

Dissertation Final Defense Planning Information for Assistant	Student completes form and submits to the PhD Assistant (1) month prior to final defense. Dissertation Defense Request List
Dissertation Final Defense Exam	Chair completes form and submits to PhD Director and Assistant Click Here: Final Defense Exam
Dissertation Submission of Data-based Manuscript for Publication	Student completes and submit hard copies of their manuscript submissions to the PhD Director & Assistant. Dissertation Submission of Date-based Manuscript for Publication
Other Forms/Links	
Graduate School Fellowships, Grants, & Travel Awards	Student can apply for Extramural Funding https://gradschool.uams.edu/students/fellowships-grants-travel-awards-for-graduate-students/
Tuition Discount	Student can apply for tuition discount. https://tuitiondiscount.uams.edu/
Tuition Graduate Research Assistant Stipend	PhD Director completes and submits to Graduate School. Graduate School Research Assistantship Stipend Request for Payment
Application Graduate School Research Assistantship	Student can apply for Graduate School Research Assistantships. Please email the PhD Director for more information
Library Resources	Sheila Thomas. 501-686-6736 https://libguides.uams.edu/nursing
Scholarships CON	CON Student Services 501-686-5224 conadmissions@uams.edu
Interprofessional Education (IPE) & Exposure Requirements	Schedule Activities https://gradschool.uams.edu/students/interprofessional-education-ipe-requirement-for-uams-graduate-school-students/

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