

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
SCHOOL OF NURSING

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE
GRADUATE PROGRAM

TITLE OF POLICY: **PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION – PhD PROGRAM**

DATE EFFECTIVE: MARCH 2007

LAST REVIEWED/REVISED: **February 2013**

POLICY: The preliminary examination assesses the breadth of the student's knowledge of the discipline, achievement during foundational doctoral study, and potential to apply research methods independently. Students must complete the preliminary examination in order to progress through the doctoral program.

The preliminary examination is to be taken in the term immediately following the completion of NUR 3016: Theoretical Foundations for Nursing Research (3 cr.), NUR 3020: Research Methods (3 cr.), NUR 3022: Qualitative Research Methods (3 cr.), and NUR 3027: Seminar on Structure of Knowledge (3 cr.).

The preliminary examination is a take home exam to be completed in one week. The exam tests knowledge of theory and research methodology as applied to the area of research emphasis.

Criteria used to review the Preliminary Examination are identified by the PhD Progression and Graduation Committee and by faculty who are members of the University Council of Graduate Faculty.

The examination is used to identify those students who may be expected to complete a doctoral program successfully and also to reveal areas of weakness in the student's preparation. Students with specific area of weakness will be required to engage in remedial activities (e.g. coursework, paper, additional laboratory or clinical experiences, etc.) as determined by faculty reviewers.

Results of the examination are reported to the student's academic advisor, the PhD Program Coordinator, and Student Services no later than the last day of the term in which the examination occurs.

Students must complete any remedial activities targeted to their weaknesses at the conclusion of the subsequent term or, if additional course work is required, students must complete that course work in the first semester in which that course is offered following the preliminary examination. When extenuating circumstances exist, the student may request in writing a review by the Dean. This request must be accompanied by a letter of support from the academic advisor and the PhD Program Coordinator.

PROCEDURE:

1. The Preliminary Examination is taken at a time agreed upon by the student and his/her academic advisor in the term following the completion of NUR 3016: Theoretical Foundations for Nursing Research (3 cr.), NUR 3020: Research Methods (3 cr.), NUR 3022: Qualitative Research Methods (3 cr.), and NUR 3027: Seminar on Structure of Knowledge (3 cr.).

2. The student sends a completed Preliminary Examination application form to the PhD Program Coordinator and the Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee. A Preliminary Examination packet will be provided to the student by the Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee.

3. The academic advisor selects three research articles in the student's research emphasis area and identifies four faculty members who could serve as reviewers of the preliminary examination and sends this information to the Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee. Of those four faculty members, three will be selected by the Progression and Graduation Committee to be reviewers. The fourth faculty reviewer will serve as an alternate in the event that one of the three is unable to serve as a reviewer. The Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee will provide the student with the materials necessary to complete the preliminary examination.

4. Within one week, the student must submit the completed Preliminary Examination, including the disc and a hard copy of the completed examination to the Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee. In the Preliminary

Examination, the student must be able to: 1) critique the three articles, 2) write a synthesis of the critique and the knowledge gained across the articles, 3) integrate this information with the state of knowledge in the research area, 4) identify the “next step” in research and 5) write a research plan based on that next step.

5. After completion, the Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee will forward the examination to three faculty reviewers previously identified by the student’s faculty advisor. The Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee sends the preliminary examination and review criteria to the three faculty reviewers.

6. Faculty reviewers submit their reviews to the Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee within two weeks.

7. If weaknesses are identified, the three faculty reviewers will meet to discuss their individual assessments. A consensus recommendation will be made by the three reviewers.

8. The final decision of the three reviewers will be forwarded to the Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee within one week of receipt of the reviews. The decision will be submitted to the PhD Program Coordinator and distributed to the student and his/her academic advisor.

9. The student’s academic advisor will discuss the results of the examination with the student.

10. In case of remediation, it is the academic advisor’s responsibility to provide evidence of completion of required activities to the Progression and Graduation Committee.

11. Upon successful completion of the preliminary examination, the academic advisor will complete a Status Forms for Graduate Programs form (Milestones).