

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
SCHOOL OF NURSINGACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE  
GRADUATE PROGRAM

---

**TITLE OF POLICY:** COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION AND OVERVIEW - PhD

**PROGRAM DATE EFFECTIVE:** SEPTEMBER 1995

**LAST REVIEWED/REVISED:** APRIL 2024

**POLICY:** The Comprehensive Examination occurs at the same time as the Overview. The Comprehensive Examination assesses the student's mastery of the general field of doctoral study, acquisition of depth and breadth of knowledge in a focused area of study or officially approved minor taken outside the School of Nursing, and the ability to use the research methods of the discipline. The Overview requires the student to carefully formulate a research plan and to justify the selected approach for studying the topic.

The Comprehensive Examination and Overview occur after successful completion of all required course work. The examination should be passed at least eight months before scheduling the final defense of the dissertation. Students may not take the comprehensive examination the same term in which the student graduate.

It is recommended that a student should plan to have completed 12 credits of dissertation (NUR3010) by the end of the semester in which they successfully complete the Comprehensive Examination and Overview. This enrollment plan will allow them to enroll in Full-Time Dissertation Study (0 credits) in the following semester. A student who is unsuccessful will be required to repeat the Comprehensive Examination and Overview.

The Comprehensive Examination and Overview may be retaken a maximum of one time. A student who does not pass after the second attempt will be dismissed from the program. 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 Dissertation Committee Chair and the PhD Program Director.

---

**PROCEDURE:**

1. The student will contact the dissertation chair regarding plans for the Comprehensive Examination and Overview.
2. The Dissertation Committee Chair informs the student when the research proposal is sufficiently developed and ready for Examination and Overview consideration by dissertation committee members.
3. The student is responsible for contacting dissertation committee members for feasible dates for the comprehensive examination and overview and conveying the information to the dissertation committee chair. Once the date and time is finalized with the Chair, the student notifies the committee members.
4. Instructions and the application form for the Comprehensive Examination and Overview are available through the PhD Program Administrative Assistant or the PhD Program Director.
5. To schedule the Comprehensive Examination and Overview, the student sends the completed application form to the Administrative Assistant of the PhD Program who notifies the Chair of PhD Council Progression and Graduation Committee. The form must be received no later than one month prior to the date selected by the student and dissertation chair for the Comprehensive Examination and Overview.
6. The student must submit a copy of the dissertation proposal to each member of the committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date for the Comprehensive Examination and Overview.
7. For the Comprehensive Examination portion of this meeting, the committee members have the

responsibility to ascertain that the student has sufficient mastery of the general field and depth and breadth in a focused area of study.

8. At the conclusion of the Comprehensive Examination and Overview, faculty participating in the review will determine if the student has passed or failed the comprehensive examination and overview.
9. Successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination and Overview requires unanimous agreement by the committee regarding responses to each of the questions. The committee must unanimously approve the dissertation research plan before the student may be recommended for candidacy for the doctoral degree.
10. At the conclusion of the Comprehensive Examination and Overview, the dissertation chair is responsible for informing the student of the decision and recommendations of the committee. The dissertation chair also will ensure that the "Comprehensive Examination and Overview for Dissertation" form is signed by all committee members, will complete the "Change of Status" form, and give the forms to the Administrative Assistant of the PhD Program who will forward the original copies of all forms to Student Affairs and Alumni Relations and will forward a copy of all documents to the Chair, PhD Council Progression and Graduation Committee and the PhD Program Director.
11. The PhD Program Director or designee informs the Dean that the student is recommended for candidacy. Students are informed of admission to candidacy by written notification from the Dean.
12. If the student does not demonstrate sufficient depth and mastery of knowledge based on responses during the examination and overview, the following procedure occurs:
  - a. A student who does not pass will be allowed to repeat the examination and overview one time.
  - b. A student who is unsuccessful in passing after the second attempt because of extenuating circumstances may seek permission from the Dean to take the examination and overview another time.

Revisions Approved by TFO: 5/98, 2/09, 11/14

Reviewed: 99-00, 02-03, 05-06, 08-09, 13-14, 17-18, 20-21, 23-24

Revised: 2/06, 01/09, 10/14, 02/18