



Anschutz

College of Nursing

Handbook for the CU Anschutz College of Nursing PhD Program 2025-2026



*Our programs pioneered the past.
Our research unlocks the future.*

Revision History based on 2024-2025 Handbook

August 2020-2025: revised curriculum plan and graduate school changes included

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME FROM THE CU ANSCHUTZ NURSING PhD PROGRAM DIRECTOR	1
CU ANSCHUTZ NURSING PhD PROGRAM.....	3
I. OUTCOME COMPETENCIES	3
II. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION.....	4
A. Admission Requirements.....	4
B. Applicants with a Non-Nursing Master’s Degree.....	4
III. PROGRAM PROGRESSION AND CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS	5
A. Degree Requirements	5
B. Curriculum and Required Courses	6
C. PhD Program Curriculum Plan	7
D. Distance Accessible/Intensives.....	7
E. Continuous Registration Requirement.....	8
F. Transfer Credit.....	8
G. NEXus Courses	9
H. Challenging or “Testing Out” of Graduate Coursework	9
I. Independent Study Policy	9
J. Grades	9
K. Quality-of-Work/Grade Requirements	10
L. Academic Probation and Dismissal	10
M. Pass/Fail Policy	10
N. Incomplete Grades (CU Anschutz Nursing Policy)	11
O. Grade Changes	11
P. Academic Grievance.....	11
IV. OTHER COURSE-RELATED POLICIES	11
A. Leave of Absence (CU Anschutz Nursing Policy).....	11
B. Readmission of Former Students (CU Anschutz Nursing Policy).....	12
C. Student Ethical Conduct	12
D. English Proficiency	12
E. Americans with Disabilities Act.....	12
V. ACADEMIC ADVISING.....	13
A. Academic/Major Advisor.....	13
B. Student Role in Academic Advising.....	13
C. Advisory Committees.....	13
VI. PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION/EVALUATION	16
A. Eligibility	16
B. Process	16
C. Submission.....	16
D. Disposition of e-files.....	16
E. PhD Faculty Preliminary Evaluation Meeting.....	16
F. Notification	17
G. Academic Grievance.....	17
VII. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION	18
A. Admission to Candidacy	18
B. Process Overview.....	18
VIII. DISSERTATION	23

A. Dissertation Advisory Committee	23
B. Dissertation Proposal.....	23
C. Initiating the Proposed Research	25
D. Research Process Advising and Follow-Up.....	25
E. Dissertation Thesis Completion.....	25
F. Manuscript Format Option.....	26
G. Final Steps in the Dissertation Process	26
APPENDIX A.....	28

This *Handbook*, which includes parts of the University of Colorado Anschutz Graduate School policies and procedures and University of Colorado Anschutz College of Nursing policies and procedures, does not constitute a contract with the CU Anschutz Graduate School or CU Anschutz Nursing, either expressed or implied. The CU Anschutz Graduate School and CU Anschutz Nursing reserve the right at any time to change, delete, or add to any of the provisions at their discretion. Furthermore, the provisions of this document are designed by the CU Anschutz Graduate School and CU Anschutz Nursing to serve as highly recommended guidelines rather than absolute rules, and exceptions may be made on the basis of extenuating circumstances.

WELCOME FROM THE CU ANSCHUTZ NURSING PhD PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Evidence-based nursing practice depends on nurse scientists to generate the evidence. Without science and without evidence, there can then be no determination of which nursing practices lead to the best outcomes. To establish and codify best clinical practices, nurse scientists investigate perplexing patient problems, test strategies to increase patient safety and care quality, lead interdisciplinary teams to improve the health care system, and add to the nursing profession's unique, valuable body of knowledge. Congratulations on choosing to join the nursing science vanguard; congratulations on pursuing a PhD at the University of Colorado Anschutz College of Nursing.

This *Handbook* contains policies and procedures specific to the progression of students enrolled in the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program. This *Handbook* should be used in conjunction with the most current edition of the [CU Anschutz Nursing Student Handbook](#) and the [CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#).

Please feel free to contact me with questions or recommendations for changes in the *PhD Handbook*.

Best wishes on this most exciting and rewarding journey!

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INTRODUCTION: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE (CU ANSCHUTZ GRADUATE SCHOOL)

The Doctor of Philosophy degree is awarded by the CU Anschutz Graduate School. Requirements for conferral of the degree are not only credit hour-based but also competency-based; in other words, the degree is not conferred merely upon the satisfactory completion of a course of study, however faithfully pursued.

Students who receive this degree must demonstrate that they are proficient in some broad subject of learning and that they can critically evaluate work in this field. Furthermore, they must have shown the ability to work independently in their chosen field and made an original, significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge.

Students are responsible for following CU Anschutz Graduate School policies and procedures, especially those related to deadlines, examinations, and registration. CU Anschutz Graduate School policies and procedures can also be found on the [CU Anschutz Graduate School resource webpage](#).

CU ANSCHUTZ NURSING PhD PROGRAM

I. OUTCOME COMPETENCIES

The Doctor of Philosophy Program at CU Anschutz Nursing prepares scientists for stewardship of the nursing discipline and membership in the community of scholars. Doctoral study engages students in intellectual inquiry, knowledge development, and the conduct of independent research to understand and enhance the health/wellbeing of and delivery of healthcare to individuals, families, and populations. Doctoral study depends on collaborative mentoring relationships between students and research faculty/other faculty scholars and active student engagement in the interdisciplinary scholarly community. Program graduates are prepared to pursue careers in intensive research environments and to become leaders of the profession. The PhD Program at CU Anschutz Nursing is designed to instill and foster specific Graduate Qualities (Table 1).

Table 1. Qualities of the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program Graduate

1.	Creates new knowledge through the research process
2.	Demonstrates commitment to the profession through publications and conference presentations or engagement in professional organizations
3.	Examines multiple theories and methodologies for application to research problems
4.	Engages with fellow scientists and students in scholarly discourse
5.	Demonstrates ethical responsibility and action as a scientist
6.	Considers research findings relevant to public health and healthcare policy

These Qualities are the outcome competencies of CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program. They are threaded through all of the evaluation milestones from the Preliminary Examination to the Dissertation Defense. Each student is encouraged to become familiar with these Qualities and explore with their Academic/Major Advisor the areas of emphasis needed to manifest them by program completion.

II. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

A. Admission Requirements

All Doctor of Philosophy students are admitted to the CU Anschutz Graduate School following submission of [required documents](#). Eligibility criteria for PhD Program admission are as follows:

- Completion of a Baccalaureate-or-higher degree in Nursing from an NLN or CCNE accredited institution;
- A 3.0 undergraduate and/or a 3.5 graduate grade-point average (GPA);
- Completion of a graduate-level inferential (intermediate) statistics course with a minimum grade of B (3.0); and
- Completion of Master's-level nursing theory course with a minimum grade of B (3.0).

If either the graduate-level nursing theory course or the inferential statistics content is not reflected in the course title on the transcript, a course description, course outline, or other supporting evidence is required.

B. Applicants with a Non-Nursing Master's Degree

Applicants who hold an earned Master's degree in a field related to nursing, but who do not possess a Master's degree in Nursing, may be admitted to the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program pending demonstration of advanced knowledge and skills in a nursing specialty area. The pursuit of an MS degree in Nursing, however, should be seriously considered. Master's-level courses in nursing theory and inferential statistics are required pre-requisites or co-requisites to PhD-level courses.

III. PROGRAM PROGRESSION AND CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

A. Degree Requirements

Awarding of the PhD degree is based on completion of **a minimum of 42 credits of graduate-level coursework**, **a submitted manuscript for publication (as first author)**, and **18 dissertation credits**. PhD requirements can be expected to take approximately four and one-half years to five years of full-time study (5-8 credits per semester). All students are expected to follow the Curriculum Plan. Full-time study is defined by the CU Anschutz Graduate School as 5 credits per semester.

CU Anschutz Graduate School policies indicate that all PhD degree requirements must be completed within **eight years of matriculation**. Students who fail to complete the degree requirements within this **eight-year** period are subject to Dismissal from the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program and the CU Anschutz Graduate School. Additionally, CU Anschutz Nursing has additional/unique degree progression requirements; in such cases, CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program policies supersede those outlined in the *CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures* (e.g., timeline for Preliminary Examination, timeline for Comprehensive Examination, timeline for the Defense of Dissertation Proposal). Figure 1 below depicts the milestones required for progression and graduation.

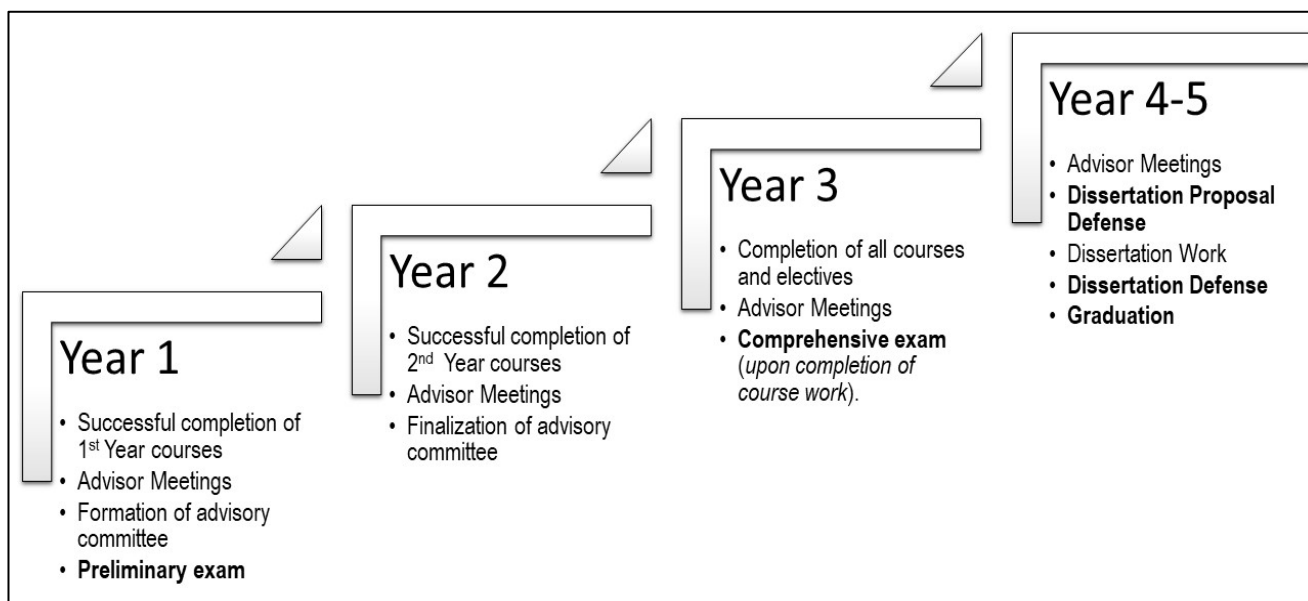


Figure 1. Timeline of Key Milestones

The following is a summary of some of the key milestones:

- A preliminary evaluation at the end of the first year of coursework with a grade of “Pass” or “Pass with Conditions”;
- Completion of all coursework with a grade of B- or better, and a minimum GPA of 3.0 or higher;
- Completion of a Comprehensive Examination, with a grade of “Pass,” by the end of the third year of coursework (students who pass the Comprehensive Examination advance to PhD Candidacy);
- Successful Defense of the Dissertation Proposal by the end of the fourth year but no more than one year since comprehensive examination; and
- An independent, scholarly Dissertation Thesis and Final Examination (Defense) with a grade of “Pass.”

The CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program builds a community of faculty and student scholars. Students admitted to the program are matched with faculty who will provide expert mentorship in the student's selected research interest and guide the student's Dissertation research. Faculty use an Advising framework underpinned by Dr Jean Watson's Caring Science principles and CIMER Mentoring Standards.

1. Biobehavioral Science. The Biobehavioral Science focus concerns health, illness, and the interrelationships among their psychosocial, behavioral, and biological processes. Nurse scientists in this area generate new knowledge by investigating the prevention, progression, or management of a disease, symptom, or another health state across the lifespan.
2. Health Care Systems. The Health Care Systems focus concerns the interrelationships among characteristics of healthcare delivery systems, technologies, and outcomes in a variety of care settings and among a variety of populations. Scientists in this area generate new knowledge by investigating the unique and cumulative effects of contexts of care and care delivery processes on outcomes, with the goal of improving the health and safety of patients and communities through the provision of quality healthcare.



3. Caring Science. Caring Science has deep roots in Watson's Theory of Human Caring. The Caring Science focus concerns integration of philosophy, arts, and humanities with clinical science for the practice of human caring and the creation of healing environments. Scientists in this area of research will use Caring Science as a foundation to explore ways of improving both healthcare delivery and individual health for the betterment of all.

These three foci emphasize both inculcation and generation of substantive knowledge in nursing. Focally recognized content experts comprise the CU Anschutz Nursing faculty and teach courses in each focal area. Each student builds an area of concentration, including an in-depth study in the selected focal area. Students' plans of study are supported by coursework within the discipline of nursing and in other disciplines. Students work closely with their Academic/Major Advisor and Advisory Committee in choosing elective courses. Electives are to be supportive of the projected Dissertation research, and one elective must be taken external to CU Anschutz Nursing. Electives taken external to CU Anschutz Nursing support Dissertation research by enhancing relationships with potential Committee members and refining the students' theoretical, content, and/or methodological perspectives. Nursing education courses, while important for future career possibilities, are not part of the plan of study and do not count as an elective.

C. PhD Program Curriculum Plan

All students are expected to follow the Curriculum Plan outlined below (Table 2). Students are prohibited from changing the Curriculum Plan and may do so only under unique circumstances and with the approval of their Academic/Major Advisor and the Program Director.

Table 2. Curriculum Plan

Overall PhD Program Curriculum Plan (with Faculty), Fall 2025

Year	Year 1		Year 2			Year 3		
Term	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring
PhD CORE	NURS 7101 Metatheory in Nursing I (3) Makic NURS 7220 Role of the Scientist I (3) Stamp NURS 7001 Seminar: Diversity of Scientific Perspectives (1) Stonbraker	NURS 7102 Metatheory in Nursing II (3) Reed NURS 7621 Qualitative Methods I (3) Coats PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION JUNE/JULY	NURS 7221 Role of the Scientist II (2) Rael	NURS 7631 Quantitative Methods I (3) Kissler/Loresto	Methods (3) NURS 7622 Qualitative Methods II Jones OR NURS 7632 Quantitative Methods II Ozkaynak	NURS 7440 Measurement (3) Thumm OR NURS 7856 Qualitative Elective III (3) Jones	NURS 7350 Research Practicum (3) Ozkaynak Optional EXTRA Course NURS 7200 Scientific Writing (3) TBD	+ 18 dissertation credits after coursework completed *Publication Requirement
Health Care Systems (HCS)			Focal Core: NURS 7803 HCS Seminar III: State of the Science (3) Fischer	Focal Core: NURS 7720 HSC I: Evaluating Healthcare Delivery Systems (3) Barton	Focal Core: NURS 7730 HSC II: Changing Healthcare Delivery Systems (3) Smith	Elective (3)*	Elective (3)*	
Biobehavioral Science (BB-Sci)			Elective (3)*	Focal Core: NURS 7740 BBS I: Intrapersonal Determinants & Phenomena (3) Hernandez/Anderson	Focal Core: NURS 7750 BBS II: Interpersonal Phenomena & Determinants (3) TBA	Elective (3)*	NURS 7760 BBS III: Interventions & Outcomes in Biobehavioral Research (3) Cook	
Caring Science (CS)			Elective (3)*	Focal Core: NURS 7511 CS state of the science (3) Reed	Focal Core: NURS 7506 Diverse Theories of Caring (3) Johnson	Focal Core: NURS 7508 Transdisciplinary Care (3) Johnson	Elective (3)*	
Credits by Focal Area	HCS: 7 BBS: 7 CS: 7	HCS: 6 (13) BBS: 6 (13) CS: 6 (13)	HCS: 5 (18) BBS: 5 (18) CS: 5 (18)	HCS: 6 (24) BBS: 6 (24) CS: 6 (24)	HCS: 6 (30) BBS: 6 (30) CS: 6 (29)	HCS: 6 (36) BBS: 6 (36) CS: 6 (35)	HCS: 6 (42) BBS: 6 (42) CS: 6 (42)	

Note Course Titles reflect catalog name eg. HCS Seminar III is the FIRST in the required HCS sequence

- Pre-Requisite = Graduate level statistics course with content through multiple regression; could "test-out"; could transfer if taken within 3 years.
- Pre-Requisite = Graduate level nursing theory course. A total of 6 credits of electives that support the dissertation are required; 3 credits of which MUST be taken outside of the discipline of Nursing

*Students are required to have six hours of elective coursework that directly supports their dissertation research.

Although infrequent, the PhD curriculum, course schedules, and offerings are subject to change. Courses are offered pending required minimum enrollment numbers. If curriculum changes are made, courses in the current curriculum will be offered for a specified period of time.

D. Distance Accessible/Intensives

The CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program was designed to be "distance accessible." Course formats generally include the use of asynchronous online platforms augmented with scheduled, synchronous webinars. The second week of each of the Fall and Spring semesters of coursework, however, is devoted to Intensives, a time when students are required to be in residence (physically present) at CU Anschutz Nursing. During this week, students meet with their Academic/Major Advisors and Advisory Committees, start new classes in a face-to-face format, attend scheduled enrichment activities, and interact within and among student cohorts to form important social-support bonds. The schedule for Intensives week is developed by the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program, with feedback from students and faculty. Initial versions of

the schedule are posted in PhD Community Canvas for students four weeks in advance to allow students to make travel plans.

E. Continuous Registration Requirement

1. *Pre-Candidate Students*. All students in the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program who have not as yet achieved candidacy (have not taken or passed their Comprehensive Examination) are expected to register for course credits EVERY Fall, Spring, and Summer Semester of the Program, including the semester in which their Comprehensive Examination takes place. A Pre-Candidate student who fails to register in any given semester could face immediate Dismissal from the program unless a Leave of Absence has been formally requested and approved by the Academic/Major Advisor and Assistant Dean of the Program. Up to 10 dissertation credits may be taken prior to comprehensive examination.
2. *PhD-Candidate Students (Post-Comprehensive Examination)*. Program Candidates (students who have successfully passed their Comprehensive Examination) must register for a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 dissertation credits each Fall and Spring Semester. Each Semester students **must complete specified objectives** attached to dissertation credits as agreed to with Adviser. It is also essential that students pre-register for courses each semester to avoid course cancellations. Students in Dissertation work must also register during the pre-registration period under the section number of their Academic/Major Advisor. Notification to students of dates for pre-registration is by student email only. Students must check their student email frequently for important announcements such as related registration information.

F. Transfer Credit

A maximum of 12 credit hours may be transferred to the PhD program, including six hours maximum allocated for elective credits and nine hours maximum allocated for courses equivalent to one or more of the courses listed on the Course Offering Plan.

Transfer credit is defined as any credit earned at another accredited institution or credits earned as a non-degree student within the CU system. Consistent with CU Anschutz Graduate School policies, "Graduate courses taken while the student was enrolled in a graduate program anywhere in the CU system, or an institution with established Memoranda of Understanding with CU Denver are considered resident, not transfer, and therefore fall outside the limits on transfer credits." As a result, courses taken through the Nursing Education Exchange (NEXus) system do not count toward the limit on transfer credits.

The process for requesting the approval of transfer credits is clearly outlined in the [CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#), and students should review this process carefully. Some highlights are as follows:

- The student must complete the [Transfer of Credit Request Form](#), attach official transcripts, and submit to the CU Anschutz Nursing Assistant Dean of the PhD Program following signature by the student's Academic/Major Advisor.
- Official transcripts showing courses to be considered for transfer MUST accompany the Transfer of Credit Request Form. To be official, the transcript must be sent directly to the PhD Program Administrator from a transcript service (such as Parchment).
- The institution where the course was taken must be accredited.
- The course(s) must be at the graduate level (500/5000 or above).
- The course(s) must have a letter grade.
- The student must have obtained a grade of B- or better per requested transfer course.
- The course(s) to be transferred must be approved by the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program and the CU Anschutz Graduate School.

- The course(s) must be transferred prior to the semester in which the Comprehensive Examination is taken.
- The course cannot be officially transferred (credit given) until the student has satisfactorily completed one semester of enrollment with a minimum GPA of 3.0.
- Transfer credits do not reduce the residency requirement but may reduce the amount of work required at CU Denver to earn a degree.

G. NEXus Courses

The Nursing Education Exchange (NEXus) consists of distance accessible graduate courses offered by a collaborative of member universities. As a founding member of NEXus, CU Anschutz Nursing endorses this opportunity for students to expand their access to quality courses. NEXus provides a [broad array of courses](#) that may serve as electives to support student Dissertations. All elective courses, including those offered through NEXus, must be approved by the student's Academic/Major Advisor. In addition, prior to registering, **NEXus courses must also be approved by the Assistant Dean of the Program**. Students interested in registering for a NEXus course should contact the [Office of Admissions and Student Affairs](#).

Since NEXus courses are taken outside the University, the student must transfer the course(s) into the CU Anschutz Graduate School (see instructions outlined above). Because all required coursework, including electives, must be successfully completed or transferred into the CU Anschutz Graduate School prior to taking the Comprehensive Examination, students should NOT be enrolled in NEXus courses the semester prior to taking their Comprehensive Examination.

H. Challenging or “Testing Out” of Graduate Coursework

Credit by examination is not allowed for graduate students. Programs may allow a student to challenge and test out of a given course, but the student does not register or receive credit for it. If a student successfully challenges a course, the program can require the student to take a different course or an elective. In all cases, the student must meet the minimum of 42 credits of coursework, plus 18 Dissertation credits, required for the PhD degree.

I. Independent Study Policy

Independent study courses are a mechanism by which a student and Academic/Major Advisor can develop and customize a course to be taken as an elective. CU Anschutz Nursing policy states, however, that **no required (non-elective) courses may be taken for credit as independent study without the prior approval of the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program**. Independent study is arranged with the approval of the Academic/Major Advisor and the faculty member supervising the study (i.e., the independent study instructor); the student and instructor may name the course as it will appear on the transcript. To enroll in an independent study course, students must first complete the Independent Study Approval Form.

Course objectives, anticipated competencies and outcomes, activities, assignments, grading criteria, and number of course credits must be collaboratively determined by the student and the instructor, clearly written in a Word document outlining the independent study course plan, and attached to the Independent Study Approval Form. The student must obtain all needed signatures on the Independent Study Approval Form (with attachments) and **submit it to the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program for final approval and signature**. The Assistant Dean will forward the approved form with attachments to the Office of the Coordinator of Graduate Programs.

J. Grades

The grading system at the University of Colorado Anschutz employs letter grades with point equivalence as follows:

A = 4.00	B+ = 3.30	C+ = 2.30	D+ = 1.30
A- = 3.70	B = 3.00	C = 2.00	D = 1.00
	B- = 2.70	C- = 1.70	D- = 0.70
			F = 0.00

IP = In-Progress; used for dissertation/thesis credits

I = Incomplete; automatically changes to F after one year

K. Quality-of-Work/Grade Requirements

For details, please refer to the [CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#). Some pertinent points include the following:

- Failure to maintain a GPA of 3.0 will result in the student being placed on Academic Probation.
- Transfer credits will not be included in the GPA calculation.
- Courses in which grades fall below B- (2.7) may not be applied toward the PhD degree, and consequently, the course must be retaken in order to achieve a grade of B- or better. The original course and grade (below B-) will appear, however, on the student's transcript. All grades received while enrolled in the PhD program, including those of courses that need to be repeated (grade of below B-), will be included in the GPA calculation.
- Any course taken more than seven (7) years prior to applying for PhD Candidacy (Comprehensive Exam), whether taken at CU or at another institution, must be determined to be current by the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program or designee(s). The Program Director will advise the CU Anschutz Graduate School in writing that such courses have been validated and deemed to be current prior to the student's advancement to Candidacy.

The policies of the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program may be more stringent than CU Anschutz Graduate School policies. In such cases, PhD Program policies will supersede the CU Anschutz Graduate School standards. Consequently, please note that the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program policy, as documented in this *Handbook*, specifies the following:

- The status of a student who receives a grade of less than a B- two times or receives less than a B- in any two courses, at any time in the program, will be referred to the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) for a recommendation about progression. The student may complete and submit to SAC a Petition for Academic Progression, which can be found in the [CU Anschutz Nursing Student Handbook](#).
- A recommendation for Progression, Suspension, or Withdrawal will be made by the SAC. A recommendation for Suspension or Withdrawal will be forwarded by the SAC to the Dean of the CU Anschutz Graduate School for action. The CU Anschutz Graduate School has a separate appeals process as listed in the *CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures*.

L. Academic Probation and Dismissal

When a student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be placed on Academic Probation, and the student and the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program will be notified by the CU Anschutz Graduate School. The Program Director will notify the student's Academic/Major Advisor. The student will have two semesters to raise the cumulative GPA to at least 3.0. With the recommendation of the Assistant Dean and concurrence of the CU Anschutz Graduate School Dean, failure to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 within the two semesters will result in immediate Dismissal from the program.

M. Pass/Fail Policy

Courses taken for graduate degrees may not be taken pass/fail. All courses taken to satisfy the minimum requirements for a degree and listed on the Application for Candidacy form must be

taken on the A-to-F grading system. The grade of B- is the lowest possible passing grade for CU Anschutz Nursing graduate and PhD programs.

N. Incomplete Grades (CU Anschutz Nursing Policy)

CU Anschutz Nursing policy states that

An incomplete grade is given only when students, for reasons beyond their control, have been unable to complete the course requirements. It is understood that a substantial amount of work must have been satisfactorily completed before such a grade is given.

If students have not completed a substantial amount of work, they should be advised to drop the course within the first two weeks of the term. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of faculty **by written request of the student**, with an agreement made as to the timeframe and work required to complete the course satisfactorily.

The issue is especially important with web-based courses. These courses are removed from the server within 2 to 3 weeks after the completion of a term to provide server space for the next term's offering. Students with a grade of Incomplete for a web-based course must definitely have a substantial amount (75%) of work completed in the course since it will be impossible for them to access these courses on an indefinite basis. A grade of Incomplete is not to be used for students who are failing a course and want extra time to improve their grade. In this case, the grade of F is given. Please be sure to follow the CU Anschutz Nursing policy when considering a grade of Incomplete for a course and evaluate whether dropping the course is the appropriate action.

O. Grade Changes

A grade of Incomplete (I) will remain on the transcript even after course requirements are completed. The course will appear on the transcript a second time, with the final letter grade noted. A grade of Incomplete will be changed to an F after one year if no grade updates are submitted by the instructor.

A grade of In-Progress (IP) is used only for Dissertation credits and is changed to final letter grades when the final approved Dissertation is submitted to the CU Anschutz Graduate School Office.

In addition, letter grades may be changed in the event of clerical or administrative error. However, no other grade changes are allowed by the CU Anschutz Graduate School following the last day of the semester of enrollment. Students are not allowed to perform additional work for a course already completed in order to improve their grade.

P. Academic Grievance

Students who feel that they have been treated unfairly or outside of normal program policies may file a grievance in accordance with procedures in the [CU Anschutz Nursing Student Handbook](#).

A student enrolled in the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program must follow the process and procedures outlined in the *CU Anschutz Nursing Student Handbook* prior to submitting a grievance to the CU Anschutz Graduate School.

IV. OTHER COURSE-RELATED POLICIES

A. Leave of Absence (CU Anschutz Nursing Policy)

A Leave of Absence may be granted for up to one year by written request to the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program. If approved, the Assistant Dean will forward the request to the CU Anschutz Graduate School for inclusion in the student's file. Students who are absent for more than one year will be Withdrawn from the PhD program and will have to re-apply and be considered with all other applicants. An approved Leave of Absence does not automatically

extend the time period for earning a degree.

To discuss program progression and prepare for program re-entry, it is the responsibility of the student to contact, in writing, the CU Anschutz Nursing Admissions and Student Affairs, Graduate Advisor(s), and Assistant Dean of the PhD Program one month prior to the end of the Leave of Absence.

B. Readmission of Former Students (CU Anschutz Nursing Policy)

Students who were previously admitted to the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program, but who did not complete that degree and who have not been registered for more than one year (three consecutive semesters), must reapply to the PhD Program and the CU Anschutz Graduate School. They must proceed as follows in seeking re-admission:

- Status clarification with the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program is necessary to determine re-admission eligibility. Former students must meet all admission criteria currently required by the CU Anschutz Graduate School and/or CU Anschutz Nursing at the time of their new application.
- They must complete a new application to the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program and submit the application fee.
- An admission recommendation will be made by a sub-committee of the PhD Advisory Committee, convened by the Assistant Dean of the PhD program. The final admission decision will be made by the CU Anschutz Graduate School.
- If re-admitted, an Individual Program Plan will be designed for the student, which may include testing for validation of current knowledge in courses previously completed.

C. Student Ethical Conduct

Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of personal integrity and professional ethics. Students must adhere to PhD program Graduate Qualities and both the College of Nursing Honor and Conduct Code, as printed in the *CU Anschutz Nursing Student Handbook*, and the CU Anschutz Graduate School Honor Code. Students who do not meet these standards and/or who violate the codes may be Dismissed immediately or placed on Disciplinary Probation by the Dean of the CU Anschutz College of Nursing or the Dean of the CU Anschutz Graduate School upon recommendation of the CU Anschutz Nursing Student Advisory Committee.

D. English Proficiency

Applicants to the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program whose native language is not English must take either the Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam. To gain admission, the student must score above 80 on the TOEFL (subscores of 20 in Reading, Listening, and Speaking, and 24 in Writing) or 6.5 on the IELTS (subscores of 5.5 in each area). A student may be referred to the CU Anschutz Nursing Admissions and Student Affairs for academic support services.

E. Americans with Disabilities Act

The University of Colorado Anschutz and CU Anschutz Nursing support the spirit and the letter of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This law is designed to help persons with disabilities access the physical facilities, academic programs, and employment opportunities of the institution. Questions regarding the ADA should be directed to the [Disability Resources and Services \(DRS\) Office](#).

V. ACADEMIC ADVISING

A. Academic/Major Advisor

At the time of admission to the PhD program, the student is assigned an Academic/Major Advisor by the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program. Selection of the Advisor is based on the compatibility between the student's proposed research and the faculty member's established program of research.

The Academic/Major Advisor is designated for the student in the **first year** to assist in selecting and sequencing courses and planning other activities to progress through the program to Candidacy status. Final elective decisions are *approved by the Assistant Dean of PhD program*.

- The Projected Degree Plan is formed in the first year for meeting the degree requirements, remediating deficiencies, and identifying dates for Preliminary and Comprehensive Exams.
- The first-year Academic/Major Advisor can remain as the student's Academic/Major Advisor beyond Year 1. However, this may be modified. The Academic/Major Advisor will be the student's main partner and guide through the PhD program.
- The Academic/Major Advisor will assist
 - the student in sequencing courses, selecting elective courses, and planning other activities to progress through the program.
 - with the Plan of Study, including
 - plans for additional course requirements specified on admission, and
 - required dates for Preliminary and Comprehensive Exams.
 - with and approve the selection of elective courses to ensure that they are supportive of the projected Dissertation research.
 - the student in preparing for the Comprehensive Examination, Dissertation Proposal/Defense, and selection of the Advisory Committee members that will help the student reach these milestones.

B. Student Role in Academic Advising

Students need to meet with their Academic/Major Advisor regularly for discussions of research ideas, grant and course opportunities, and other potential areas of need/interest. The student is responsible for initiating these meetings. **It is recommended that meetings occur at least monthly. ALL Students** will also meet with the Assistant Dean of PhD program once during Intensive Week and at least one other time during the academic year.

C. Advisory Committees

Through the process of advancing to Candidacy and Graduation, there are additional Faculty Advisory Committees that will provide advice to the student and be responsible for determining successful attainment of all benchmarks (Figure 1), except the Preliminary Examination. The Advisory Committees are the Comprehensive Examination Advisory Committee, the Proposal Defense Committee, and the Dissertation Defense Committee. Ideally, membership will be partly or entirely uniform across all of these Committees, creating a stable advisory network for the student. Table 3 displays the timeline, purpose, composition, and documents associated with each Advisory Committee. **Process Checklists are provided in the PhD Community Canvas site.**

Table 3. Summary of Advisory Committees

	Comprehensive Examination Advisory Committee	Dissertation	
		Proposal Defense Committee	Thesis Defense Committee
Formed	Early in the first year and finalized by Year 2	Post-completion of the Comprehensive Exam	Approval of the Dissertation Proposal
Purpose(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide the student through her/his graduate studies and guard against too narrow a specialization • Review student progress through the program • Discuss manuscript vs regular thesis options early • Confirm that the student has successfully completed the requirements for Candidacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide and approve the Dissertation Proposal • Determine acceptability of the Dissertation as a worthwhile contribution to knowledge in the student's area of concentration and nursing science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide and approve the Dissertation research process • Determine acceptability of the completed Dissertation
Membership	Academic/Major Advisor and 2 other faculty members , Outside Member (N = 4; <i>must include an Outside Member</i>)	Academic/Major Advisor, Comprehensive Examination Committee members (N = 4; <i>must include an Outside Member</i>)	Same
Graduate Faculty Appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic/Major Advisor and Chair must hold regular graduate faculty appointment • Other members must hold regular or special graduate faculty appointments 	Same	Same
Forms*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate Faculty Appointment Application (Special) • Advisory/Comprehensive Exam Committee Agreement • Application for Candidacy • Exam Request • PhD Comprehensive Exam Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory/Dissertation Committee Agreement • Approval of Dissertation Proposal Defense Examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of Dissertation Progression • Biosketch • Exam Request • PhD Thesis Defense Report • Thesis Approval
Submitted To	Graduate Advisor(s), CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Administrator, and Assistant Dean of the PhD Program	Graduate Advisor(s), CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Administrator, and Assistant Dean of the PhD Program	CU Anschutz Graduate School

*See Comprehensive Exam Checklist and Dissertation Checklist on the PhD Canvas Community site for details.

Each Advisory Committee adheres to the following guidelines as determined by the CU Anschutz Graduate School and the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program:

- The student, in collaboration with the Academic/Major Advisor, is responsible for selecting the members that serve on each Advisory Committee. **The Assistant Dean of the PhD program provides final approval.**
 - The Academic/Major Advisor is a member of all Advisory Committees and must hold a regular CU Anschutz graduate faculty appointment.
 - The additional members must hold regular or special graduate faculty appointments with CU Anschutz Graduate School.
 - Chair of ALL examinations must hold regular graduate faculty appointments
 - One “Outside Member” **must** be part of the Comprehensive Examination Advisory, Proposal Defense, and Dissertation Defense Committees.
 - The Outside Member must be outside CU Anschutz Nursing.
 - An individual with special expertise in the student’s area of interest from another University may be acceptable as the Outside Member.
 - If the Outside Member does not hold a current CU Anschutz graduate faculty appointment, the student must first receive approval from the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program. Upon approval the student must submit the candidate’s CV or Biosketch to the PhD Program Administrator who will then initiate the Special Graduate Faculty Appointment Application. The processing of graduate faculty membership can take several weeks and should be initiated as soon as the individual is selected for an Advisory Committee (suggested time to allow is 10 weeks prior to the expected date of the Comprehensive Examination).
 - Any costs incurred to bring an outside member to campus or connect the Outside Member via interactive video are the responsibility of the student, not CU Anschutz Nursing.
- The members of the Advisory Committees will determine the order of readers for the Comprehensive Examination, Proposal Defense, and Dissertation Defense Committee meetings.
- The student’s Advisory Committee membership as well as examinations and defense schedule must be approved by the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program.
- For further information, please refer to the CU Anschutz Nursing Student Advising Policy in the [CU Anschutz Nursing Student Handbook](#).

VI. PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION/EVALUATION

As specified in the *CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures*, the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD program is responsible for ensuring that students are qualified for doctoral study by successfully passing a Preliminary Examination (hereafter termed an Evaluation). The CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Preliminary Evaluation is designed as a summative evaluation of the student's first year of doctoral study and progress toward realizing the Qualities of the PhD graduate (Table 1).

A. Eligibility

To be eligible for the Preliminary Evaluation, students must have

- Successfully completed required coursework in the Year 1 Fall and Spring Semesters, with a grade of B- or better and a cumulative GPA of > 3.0) (see PhD program Curriculum Plan).
- Eliminated any deficiencies in prerequisites (inferential statistics or Master's-level nursing theory course).

B. Process

The Preliminary Evaluation is based on the Qualities of the PhD graduate and is designed to capture student progress at the end of the first two semesters of the program. The Preliminary Evaluation Form will be completed by the following:

- Course instructors following each course in the first two-three semesters of the curriculum
- Academic/Major Advisors
- Students
 - In addition to completing the Preliminary Evaluation Form, students will complete a self-evaluation for each of the six categories of evaluation.
 - The self-evaluation will be typed, no more than three pages, single-spaced, with 12-point font and one-inch margins.
 - With the exception of the single-spacing, the formatting should adhere to APA style.
 - The College of Nursing PhD program uses APA 7.X as a standard throughout the curriculum. All assignments and examination documents/Dissertation must use APA **unless** faculty have required a journal-related alternative referencing system for an assignment. This exception to the rule must be documented in the syllabus for that course assignment at the time of writing.

C. Submission

Students, course faculty, and Academic/Major Advisors will submit the form (students will submit the self-evaluation) by email attachment to the PhD Program Administrator no later than **5:00 p.m. MDT on the fourth Friday in May**.

D. Disposition of e-files

The PhD Program Administrator will collate files pertaining to each student and forward the files to each student's Academic/Major Advisor and the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program for synthesis.

E. PhD Faculty Preliminary Evaluation Meeting

The Preliminary Evaluation Meeting will be coordinated by the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program and occur annually in June. This meeting will be considered confidential: information from the meeting will not be shared with any students or other faculty not in attendance except as deemed appropriate by the Assistant Dean PhD Program.

- A quorum for this meeting will include a majority of the first-year course faculty and Academic/Major Advisors.
- All faculty members of the PhD program will be invited. Academic/Major Advisors will present collated/synthesized results of Preliminary Evaluation documents to the PhD faculty.

- The Academic/Major Advisor will provide recommendations:
 - *Recommendation of Pass*—students who receive a Pass will progress in the program.
 - *Pass with Conditions*—students who receive a Pass with Conditions will receive a remediation plan but will progress in the program during the course of the plan.
 - A recommendation for a Pass with Conditions requires a time-limited remediation plan (no longer than six months), which has been prepared by the student's Advisor/Advisory Committee and brought to this meeting for discussion. The remediation plan content and timeline will be formalized through faculty discussion at the Preliminary Evaluation Meeting.
 - Students who fulfill the plan as outlined and in the specified time frame will continue to progress in the program.
 - Students who fail to fulfill the plan will receive a grade of failure on the Preliminary Evaluation, and the Assistant Dean will recommend that the CU Anschutz Graduate School Withdraw the student from the program.
 - *Fail*—students who receive a Fail are subject to immediate Dismissal from the CU Anschutz Graduate School upon the recommendation of the program and concurrence of the Dean of the CU Anschutz Graduate School.
 - A Fail recommendation should include information about when and how the student was notified of being in jeopardy in the program (e.g., counseling, Unsatisfactory Progress Notice)
- Following discussion, faculty members will determine by majority vote whether the student receives a Pass, a Pass with Conditions, or a Fail.

F. Notification

The Assistant Dean of the PhD Program is responsible for

- Explaining to students the Preliminary Evaluation process and timeline during Intensive Week.
- Formally notifying students of the results of the Preliminary Evaluation.
- Copying the Academic/Major Advisor on all communication with each student.
- Placing a copy of the notification letter in the student's file in the PhD program Administration Record, Graduate Advisor(s).
- Notifying the CU Anschutz Graduate School of the date of results through Comprehensive Examination application process.

G. Academic Grievance

Students have the right to file a grievance to request a review of decisions and actions, following procedures as outlined in the *CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures*.

VII. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

A. Admission to Candidacy

Admission to Candidacy occurs with the completion of the Comprehensive Examination.

After completing or registering for all program-required, non-dissertation coursework, and concurrent with applying for admission to Candidacy, doctoral (PhD/EdD) students must take a Comprehensive Examination in their respective discipline. This Examination will test a student's mastery of a broad field of knowledge, not merely the formal coursework that s/he has completed (CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures).

CU Anschutz Graduate School policies and procedures apply to the Comprehensive Examinations taken by all CU Anschutz Nursing PhD students.

B. Process Overview

While specific courses completed by the candidate are important, their content has been tested as a portion of the grading process for the course. The Comprehensive Examination is not a re-examination of course content. The Comprehensive Examination provides the PhD candidate with the opportunity to **demonstrate mastery and synthesis** of a broad range of nursing science knowledge, including the following areas:

- Theory construction, analysis, and evaluation;
- Research and analytic methods required to answer significant scientific questions;
- Existing and emerging knowledge in the nursing focus area (i.e., area of concentration); and
- Relevant knowledge from other fields that contribute to nursing science.

The Comprehensive Examination process **begins in the second year of the program and must be completed no later than the end of the student's third year**. Under extenuating circumstances, and with the approval of the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program and agreement of the Dean of the CU Anschutz Graduate School, the Examination may occur during the fourth year.

The Comprehensive Examination process culminates in an Oral Examination (Figure 3). The Comprehensive Examination process has three main steps:

- Naming Committee Members (i.e., identifying the members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee);
- Written Readiness Portion (i.e., preparing the Comprehensive Paper); and
- Oral Examination (i.e., taking the formal Comprehensive Examination).

The Comprehensive Examination will be taken **during or immediately following** the last semester of formal coursework (i.e., when all required nursing coursework is completed). The Academic/Major Advisor and **the three** Advisory Committee members shall assess completion of program requirements and readiness of the student to take the Comprehensive Examination. Students must be registered for a minimum of one credit at the time of the Examination.

Each of the steps is outlined in detail on the following pages. Naming Committee Members is the initial step and is carried out in conjunction with the student's Academic/Major Advisor. This Committee will meet during the second and third years to help determine the specifics of the Written Readiness Portion and the Oral Examination. Once the Committee determines that the Comprehensive Paper is acceptable, the Oral Comprehensive Examination follows. Successful completion of all steps of the process will result in the student moving to Candidacy. A Checklist is available on the PhD Community Canvas site to help guide students through the process.

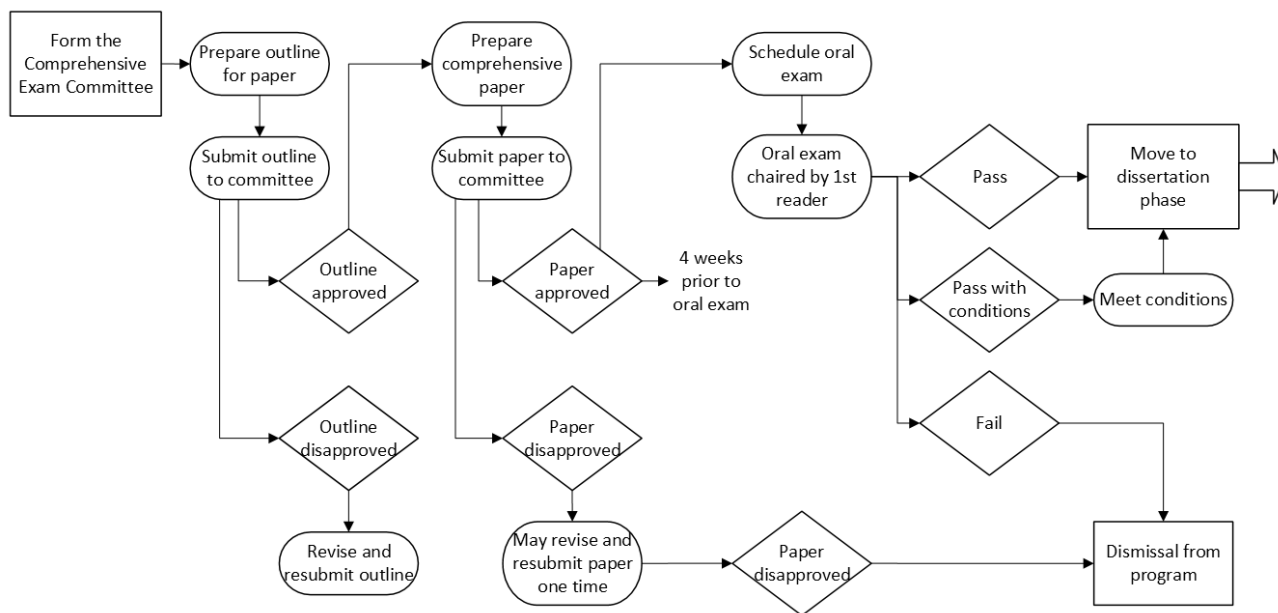


Figure 3. Comprehensive Examination Steps

1. First Step—Forming the Comprehensive Examination Committee. The Comprehensive Examination Committee has a minimum of three members (i.e., the Academic/Major Advisor and other faculty members selected by the Academic/Major Advisor and the student [and must include an Outside Member]). According to CU Anschutz Graduate School and CU Anschutz Nursing policies, **the Academic/Major Advisor cannot serve as Chair of the Oral Examination.** The processing of graduate faculty membership can take several weeks, so the process must be initiated as early as possible to avoid delay of the examination date (suggested time is at least 10 weeks prior to expected date of the Comprehensive Examination). The members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee, in conjunction with the student, will determine the order of readers of the Comprehensive Examination:
 - The order of readers of the examination is Academic/Major Advisor, First Reader, Second Reader, Third Reader, and Fourth Reader (if applicable).
 - The Outside Member usually serves as either the Third or Fourth (last) Reader.
 - The Chair of the Examination Committee should be the First Reader and is required to hold a regular CU Anschutz Graduate School appointment. Advisor can NOT Chair the examination.
 - The student, with the Academic/Major Advisor, provides nominees to the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program (via the Advisory/Comprehensive Exam Committee Agreement form) to fill the Committee appointments a minimum of **six weeks prior to the expected date of the Comprehensive Examination.** This should occur after the Outside Member has received the CU Anschutz Graduate School special appointment.
2. Second Step—Written Readiness Portion (Preparing the Comprehensive Paper). The Comprehensive Paper is a preliminary indicator of readiness to take the Oral Examination and is used by the Committee to develop Examination questions; it is not evaluated as part of the Examination. The Academic/Major Advisor provides guidance and consultation to the student in selecting the topic of the Comprehensive Paper and in projecting the overall development of the topic. The topic should be carefully considered for doctoral-level thinking; there should be potential for sufficient breadth and depth in addressing the topic so that basic assumptions are examined and well-analyzed; and there should be a direction that the student can see leading to a creative approach to the topic. Once the topic and the

direction have been clarified, the **student independently completes** the Paper. *Independence* is defined as free of editing, proofing, or major revisions provided by the Academic/Major Advisor or Committee members. **It is required that the Academic/Major Advisor and first and second readers approve an outline for the Paper prior to the student initiating the independent work.**

- Comprehensive Paper guidelines are as follows: no more than 20 typed, double-spaced pages in length (exclusive of references); prepared using the APA format; and equivalent to a publishable manuscript. No appendices allowed for examination.
 - The Paper should reflect original thinking by the student, drawing on and reflecting a synthesis of knowledge and skills acquired during the doctoral program experience. While the Paper should build from the doctoral program experience, it is to move beyond coursework already completed. **Original work is required** no repetition of prior work is allowed.
 - The Paper may provide foundational material that the student will use in conceptualizing the Dissertation, but the Comprehensive Paper is to reflect the knowledge and intellectual skills acquired in the program and not focus too narrowly on the projected Dissertation. The faculty encourages students to submit Comprehensive Papers for publication on advice of the Advisory Committee.
 - CU Anschutz Nursing PhD Program policy requires that drafts of major papers be submitted to Committee members with **at least four weeks** allowed for reading and response.
 - This policy accommodates the varying teaching, research, clinical, and travel schedules of the faculty and is respectful of their time and efforts. Usually, the Academic/Major Advisor and First Reader (Examination Chair) read the major papers identified above, perform initial review, and make verbal recommendations for changes prior to submitting the document to the other two members of the Committee.
 - However, the time frame for submission should be adjusted accordingly based on Committee members' specific schedule demands.
- The **Application for Candidacy form** needs to be completed and returned to the PhD Program Administrator **at least five weeks prior** to the planned date of the Comprehensive Examination. The Administrator will review the document for accuracy; any errors can delay eventual approval by the CU Anschutz Graduate School. The student will obtain the Application for Candidacy form from the [CU Anschutz Graduate School website](#).
- The student also will download an **Exam Request form** from the CU Anschutz Graduate School website. After obtaining necessary signatures, the student must submit this form to the PhD Program Administrator **at least three weeks prior** to the planned date of the Comprehensive Examination. After reviewing both forms, the PhD Administrator will submit them in tandem to the CU Anschutz Graduate School at least two weeks before the Examination.
 - When the student completes and returns this form, the CU Anschutz Graduate School Office will (a) type a notice of examination, (b) distribute copies of it to the student and examination Committee members, and (c) provide a PhD Comprehensive Exam Report form for the Committee to sign after the Examination.
- Usually, minor revisions are **requested but no edits provided by the Advisor are allowed**. After approval by the Advisor and Examination Chair, the student then submits the **Examination Paper** to the full Comprehensive Examination Advisory committee in final form. The final written portion will be evaluated using these criteria:
 - The Paper is focused on a substantive topic in the discipline of nursing that (a) synthesizes the theory, research, and philosophy components of the doctoral program and (b) emphasizes nursing knowledge components of the program.
 - The Paper is focused, concise, logically ordered, and readable.

- The discussion reflects the breadth of knowledge in the field.
- The discussion reflects the depth of understanding of the issues and problems related to the topic.
- Original ideas and sound rationale for those ideas are presented; the significance of the ideas for the discipline of nursing is convincing.
- The student's position on controversial issues in the area of inquiry is defended with sound rationale.
- The content of the Paper is well-founded and accurate.
- Scholarly methods and approaches to inquiry are reflected.
- Citation and documentation of sources used are accurate and comprehensive.
- Consensus that the student is ready to prepare to take the Comprehensive Examination is required of the Comprehensive Examination Advisory Committee members **prior to confirming** the date and time of the Oral Comprehensive Examination. However, setting the date/time is not a guarantee that the Exam will take place on that date/at that time. *Advisory Committee consensus that the student is ready to take the Exam is required **one week** prior to taking the Oral Comprehensive Examination by the Chair.*
- If the Comprehensive Examination Advisory Committee does not agree that the student is ready, the student will not advance to the Oral Comprehensive Exam.
 - Registration must be maintained according to CU Anschutz Graduate School policies; these credits may be Dissertation credits (up to the maximum allowable of 10 credits).
 - The original planned Oral Comprehensive Examination is to be canceled and rescheduled when the Committee requires new/resubmission of the Paper.
 - The Committee will meet with the student to convey its evaluative comments and provide guidance about demonstrating readiness to take the Oral Exam.
 - A written contract of agreement between the Committee and student is to be prepared and distributed to all concerned with the timeframe for completion of the Written Readiness Portion specified.
 - The contract may include an agreement that the student complete additional coursework, critical reading, or tutoring, among other steps.
 - The Committee's second assessment of readiness for the Comprehensive Examination will be accomplished by review of one revision of part or all of the original Paper.
 - If the requirements are not satisfied within the agreed-upon timeframe, the student will not be eligible to take the Oral Comprehensive Examination and will be dismissed from the program.
 - The Academic/Major Advisor will notify the student of the Committee's evaluation of the revised Paper no later than two weeks after it is presented to the Committee.

The final approved Comprehensive Paper will be retained by CU Anschutz Nursing in the student's official file. *Reminder: It is essential that the student allow sufficient time for committee members to read these documents.*

3. Third Step—Oral Examination (Taking the Formal Comprehensive Examination). CU Anschutz Graduate School policies apply to the conduct and scoring of the Oral Comprehensive Exam.

- All members **must be present for this exam in person or via virtual means such as Zoom**. There is NO in-person requirement for the examination. If the student chooses an in-person exam, only the Outside Member may participate via virtual means such as Zoom. Any costs incurred in the interactive video exam or travel to attend in-person are the responsibility of the student. If virtual attendance is not possible, approval of an alternative member by the CU Anschutz Graduate School can occur.

- The Committee members will complete an evaluation of the Oral portion of the Comprehensive Examination via the PhD Comprehensive Exam Report form. This form notifies the CU Anschutz Graduate School of the results of the examination. Please see the *CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures* for an explanation of Examination results (pass/pass with conditions/fail).
- Following completion of the Comprehensive Examination, the Comprehensive Examination Advisory Committee concludes its activities and is discontinued. The same Committee or a new Committee will be appointed for the Dissertation.
- A Student **may NOT** use the PhD(c) or PhD-C abbreviation; PhD Candidate in full is the preferred signatory within the PhD Program.

*Note: It is in the student's best interest to maintain a consistent Committee for smoother progression through the Dissertation process. However, due to faculty retirements and/or change of topic/interest area and expertise needed, it is possible the student will need to reconstitute the Committee. The **approval of the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program is required** for this change, and former and new members of the Committee must be notified by the student.*

- If a student fails to complete all requirements for the degree within **eight years** of the date of matriculation, and within **four years** of the date the Comprehensive Examination was passed, a second Comprehensive Examination similar in extent to the first will be required before the Candidate may move on to the Dissertation process.

VIII. DISSERTATION

The Dissertation process is the culmination of knowledge gained in the program and a clear demonstration that the student has developed the Qualities of a PhD graduate. The Dissertation Thesis is the written demonstration of these Qualities and is based on an original investigation that displays scholarly and critical judgment, as well as familiarity with tools and methods of research. The subject of the Dissertation Thesis must be approved by the student's Dissertation Committee. To be approved, the Dissertation Thesis should make a worthwhile contribution both to knowledge in the student's area of concentration and to **nursing science as a whole**. CU Anschutz Graduate School policies and procedures apply to every step in the Dissertation Checklist. Upon successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination and attainment of Doctoral Candidate status, the candidate will select a Dissertation Advisor or Mentor.

A. Dissertation Advisory Committee

The Academic/Major Advisor and the Candidate will determine the membership of the Dissertation Committee, which may include all or none of the Comprehensive Examination Committee members.

Note: It is in the student's best interest to maintain a consistent Committee for smoother progression through the Dissertation process.

- The composition of the Committee will be a **minimum of four** graduate faculty members with one of the four being an Outside Member. All four Committee members must hold CU Anschutz Graduate School appointments. The Assistant Dean of the PhD Program *may* approve a fifth member as appropriate.
- As with the Comprehensive Examination Committee, members will be designated by the student as follows: Dissertation Advisor, First Reader, Second Reader, and Third Reader, according to their **expected contributions to the Thesis**. A formal agreement to serve on the Committee needs to be obtained via the Advisory/Dissertation Committee Agreement form.
- At least one member must be from outside CU Anschutz Nursing. The Outside Member shall represent the Dean of the CU Anschutz Graduate School at the Defense. The same guidelines for an Outside Member that are described in the Comprehensive Examination section apply.
- The **Assistant Dean of the PhD Program must approve the Dissertation Advisory Committee**. Changes in Committee membership shall be processed similarly.

Early in Dissertation development, the student should meet with the Dissertation Advisory Committee to discuss the proposed topic, make tentative plans for preparation of the Dissertation Proposal, and propose a timeframe for the Dissertation process.

B. Dissertation Proposal

The student must submit for approval by the Dissertation Committee a written plan for Dissertation research. This plan must consist of an overview of the proposed research, its original contribution to the field, and a description of research design and methods.

- In CU Anschutz Nursing, the Dissertation Proposal is usually in the format of the first three chapters of the Dissertation:
 - Chapter 1—Introduction, problem statement, significance, purpose, etc.;
 - Chapter 2—Literature review and conceptual framework (if appropriate); and
 - Chapter 3—Methods.

Table 4 provides an overview of the Dissertation Proposal content and the Dissertation Thesis options (traditional and manuscript options).

Additional guidance for the manuscript format option is located in Appendix A.

Table 4. Proposal and Dissertation Options Crosswalk Overview

Section (Chapter)	Proposal	Dissertation	
		Traditional	Manuscript Option
A(1)	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose • Rationale • Hypotheses/ Research Questions • Limitations • Implications for Nursing • Definitions 	Same as proposal	
B(2)	Comprehensive Review of the Literature	Same as Proposal	Example Article <i>Narrative or Focused Review or Concept Analysis Paper as Part of the Chapter</i>
C(3)	Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design • Sample • Setting • Procedures • Analysis Strategies 	Same as Proposal	Example Article <i>Methodology-Based Article— Analysis Procedure, Instrument Testing, Pilot Work— Part of the Chapter</i>
D(4)		Results	Example Article <i>Part or All of the Results Can Serve as Part of the Dissertation Results and Conclusions</i>
E(5)		Discussion and Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations • Implications for Further Research • Implications for Nursing 	Summary
F	References		
G	Appendices		
	(Examples—Human Subject Approval and Consent, Instruments, etc.).		

Adapted from Locke (2017) and *American Psychological Association Publication Guidelines*, 6th ed.

The written dissertation proposal should be circulated to the Dissertation Committee approximately four weeks prior to the formal presentation (CU Anschutz Nursing calls this meeting the **Proposal Defense**). The written dissertation proposal shall be approved by each of the Dissertation Committee members prior to the Proposal Defense. While it is helpful to have all members of the Dissertation Committee present at the Proposal Defense (on Zoom or in-person), it is permissible to have one or two members (not the Advisor) join by telephone. The Dissertation Advisor **will Chair** the Proposal Defense as this meeting is a CU Anschutz Nursing requirement rather than a CU Anschutz Graduate School requirement. At the end of the meeting, the members of the Committee must sign the Approval of Dissertation Proposal Defense Examination form to signify their contract with the student to conduct the Dissertation as

approved. The signed Approval of Dissertation Proposal Defense Examination form and a copy of the first three chapters must be submitted to the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program and the PhD Program Administrator.

C. Initiating the Proposed Research

The proposed research must have written approval from all members of the Dissertation Committee and the Institutional Review Boards of the University ([Colorado Multiple Institutional Review Board](#) [COMIRB]) and any data collection sites prior to beginning any data collection. All research conducted for the PhD degree must meet regulatory standards specified by federal, state, and local agencies regarding ethical research, animal use, human subjects, and environmental safety. Students are listed as the PIs of projects submitted to the COMIRB office; the mentor is also listed. All students must complete all training and certification required by the COMIRB office, including HIPAA training, certification, and updates. If another institution is involved in or the site of data collection (e.g., VA or Children's Hospital Colorado), students are also responsible for fulfilling requirements of that institution.

D. Research Process Advising and Follow-Up

Following the Proposal meeting, according to CU Anschutz Graduate School policies and procedures, the Dissertation Examination Committee must meet every 12 months (Zoom conference is allowed) to evaluate the student's work and ensure satisfactory progress since the previous meeting. The Committee Chair will complete the Evaluation of Dissertation Progression form summarizing the student's progress, or lack thereof, towards dissertation credit objectives and send copies to the student, the Assistant Dean of the PhD Program, and the Graduate Dean **once every 12 months**. Major modifications in the design and analysis of the Dissertation must receive Committee approval in writing and reported to the Assistant Dean of the PhD program. In case of non-satisfactory performance, remediation steps should be suggested in the report.

Students must register for a minimum of 18 credits of NURS 8990, using the section number of the Dissertation Advisor. CU Anschutz Graduate School policies and procedures apply to the allotments and distribution of these credits. A student must also be registered for 5 credits in the semester of the Defense Examination, even if this semester is Summer term. If the student has not defended at the time 18 credits are completed, the student will continue to register for credits according to CU Anschutz Graduate School policies through the semester of the Dissertation Defense Examination.

E. Dissertation Thesis Completion

The Dissertation must be completed and submitted in written form to the Committee members at least 30 days before the expected date of the Final Examination (Dissertation Defense). Members of the Committee should provide feedback regarding major concerns about the written Thesis as soon as possible to the Dissertation Chair and fatal flaws must be reported by email **no less** than one week before the scheduled examination. Approval by the Dissertation Committee must be obtained prior to scheduling the Final Examination. Students must comply with deadlines and rules for submission and Defense Examination of the completed Dissertation as stated by the *CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures* and the CU Anschutz Academic Calendar.

After the Dissertation has been completed and before the degree is conferred, a Final Examination on the Dissertation and related topics is conducted in two parts, an oral presentation of the Dissertation research that is open to the public, called the Public Seminar, and a closed examination conducted by the examining Committee.

Note: Unlike the Comprehensive Examination, CU Anschutz Graduate School policies allow the Dissertation Advisor/Mentor to chair the Dissertation Defense Examination.

F. Manuscript Format Option

Students have the option to include published articles or submissions under review within their Dissertation. Publication of research and other scholarly products is an important milestone in the development of the young scholar completing their PhD.

With approval of the Dissertation Advisor and written permission from the publisher, students may include incorporate into the Dissertation published or pre-published work relevant to the student's research. The Dissertation Advisor will grant permission for inclusion only if these works (a) contribute to the logical flow of the work, (b) facilitate understanding of concepts and/or underlying theoretical bases for the study, (c) identify underlying problems, (d) illuminate issues with study design or methods, (e) clarify instrument development processes, (f) present pilot data or instrument-validation findings, (g) discuss analytic approaches, (h) help portray or illustrate findings, and/or (i) promote interpretation, discussion, and dissemination of study findings.

To include published or submitted manuscripts, the following conditions apply:

- The student will work with the Dissertation Advisor and Committee members as appropriate to explore the use of the manuscript option. The Dissertation Advisor will have final approval for the manuscript option.
- The included manuscript or portions of the manuscript must be the submitted prior to the final copyright published version.
- The inclusion of publications or submissions from prior work must have prior approval from the Dissertation Advisor.
- The inclusion of a manuscript must logically flow within the chapter structure, be relevant, and read as one cohesive document.
- The format and chapter structure of the manuscript option is the same as the traditional Dissertation.
- If a submitted manuscript has been accepted for publication or has already been published, the student will use APA format when including the article in the Reference list.
- The student will NOT include the actual published article within the Dissertation.
- The student is responsible for securing any permission to use copyrighted material from the publisher or owner of the copyright. Documentation of this permission must be included in the Appendix of the Dissertation.

G. Final Steps in the Dissertation Process

The Assistant Dean of the PhD Program must approve the student's Dissertation Defense Committee and the Examination schedule. The student must notify the CU Anschutz Graduate School of the Examination via the Exam Request form at least three weeks before the Examination. The student must also complete and submit the Biosketch form at the same time. The CU Anschutz Graduate School will send announcements of the Examination to appropriate faculty members, and the signed forms will be sent to the program office to be placed in the student's file for use at the Examination. The CU Anschutz Graduate School will also post the notice of the Final Examination. The student must be registered for credits at the time of the Examination.

All members of the Committee **must be present for this exam in person or via virtual means such as Zoom**. There is NO in-person requirement for the examination. If the student chooses an in-person exam, only the Outside Member may participate via virtual means such as Zoom. Any costs incurred in the interactive video exam or travel to attend in-person are the responsibility of the student. The Committee members will complete an evaluation of the Examination via the PhD Thesis Defense Report form. This form notifies the CU Anschutz Graduate School of the results of the Examination. Please see the *CU Anschutz Graduate School Policies and Procedures* for an explanation of Examination results (pass/pass with conditions/fail).

The Dissertation must comply with the specifications of the CU Anschutz Graduate School's [Format Guide for Theses and Dissertations](#) (under the Graduate School Resources tab). One formally approved PDF copy of the Thesis must be submitted to ProQuest by the deadline specified by the CU Anschutz Graduate School. The student must also submit the Thesis Approval form by the specified deadline (please note this form is different from the PhD Thesis Defense Report form). In addition, an abstract, not to exceed 350 words, should be submitted for publication in Dissertation Abstracts International.

Note: Please pay attention to deadlines. Following the Dissertation Defense Examination, the student has 60 days to complete the Dissertation and submit the written copies as outlined above. Each semester, pertinent deadlines are posted on the CU Anschutz Academic Calendar, on the web pages of the CU Anschutz Graduate School, and sent via email to graduate students. These deadlines will determine in which semester the student receives a diploma following Thesis submission. It is helpful to plan ahead: for example, if a student plans to graduate in May, the last day to file the Exam Request form and Biosketch may be in March. The last day to take the Dissertation Defense Examination would be in early April, and last day for submission of the Thesis Approval form and final Dissertation copy would be the end of April.

CU Anschutz Graduate School policies and procedures take precedence. Please refer to these policies for each step in the PhD Program from Preliminary Examination through Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation. **The PhD Program provides annual checklists for these processes in the PhD Community Canvas**, but always confirm dates with the CU Anschutz Graduate School Academic calendar on their website for that year.

CU Anschutz Nursing and the CU Anschutz Graduate School must be notified in writing (diploma card) of a student's plan to participate in the Graduation ceremony. Full academic regalia are required and may be rented.

APPENDIX A

Manuscript Dissertation Option Guidelines

Dissertation criteria must be met regardless of choice of Traditional OR Manuscript option.

- The manuscripts or publications must represent research or scholarship comparable in scope and contribution to the component of the traditional dissertation that they replace.
- Manuscript option should be a discussion between student/committee early/prior to candidacy in their PhD
- Dissertation Proposal includes the same overarching contribution to knowledge development for both the Traditional and Manuscript options

The manuscript dissertation option REQUIRES a minimum of three manuscripts written within the duration of the PhD program that are submission-ready* to specified journals (readiness determined by the advisor and/or dissertation committee).

Types of articles generally used are:

- Integrative, systematic, scoping, or narrative reviews; qualitative syntheses; concept analyses/build, model/framework analysis, theory and/or philosophical analyses.
- Methods/analysis/findings of data-based papers
- More than one results paper may be needed

**Submission-ready* may still require edits (e.g., reducing word count, etc.) before actual submission; dissertation criteria take precedence over journal author guidelines

The manuscripts must have been submission-ready, submitted, accepted, OR published in a peer-reviewed journal. Prior to dissertation defense, the student will be responsible to clearly delineate where in the publication process each paper is and obtain approval from the dissertation committee.

- Including already published papers must be approved by the advisor and dissertation committee based on meeting the criteria of dissertation content requirements and cohesiveness with their dissertation study.
- Publication status (submitted/accepted/under review) should be clearly articulated in the final dissertation. An example table of how to present this is as follows.

Manuscript	Title	Dissertation aims addressed	Journal and Publication Status
1			
2			
3			

All included manuscripts must be logically connected and coherently integrated into the dissertation. Simply grouping a collection of manuscripts/publications is not acceptable as a dissertation in either format or concept. How the papers are coherently connected will be articulated in the Introduction and Discussion chapters of the dissertation.

All manuscripts must be an individual student-led product (confirmed by the advisor and dissertation committee) of PhD-related study while enrolled in the CU Anschutz Nursing PhD program.

- An *individual student-led product* is a manuscript **written** by the first-author student whose intellectual effort has driven the project and collaboration of the author group (if applicable).
 - If there is multiple authorship, there must be a discussion with the Advisor and/or

Dissertation Committee to determine roles/responsibilities and author order. When determining authorship, students should refer to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association for information on 'publication credit' or the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' reference on '[Authorship and Contributorship](#).'

- The inclusion of these papers in the final dissertation must be allowable under the copyright agreement the student signed when the paper was submitted/accepted by the journal and the paper must be in the form that the specific journal allows.
- If dissertation committee members are co-authors on the manuscripts, they can contribute written work **after** the dissertation has been completed and received final approval. Prior to dissertation completion, committee members should only contribute that to which they would contribute to the traditional chapter format dissertation.

A manuscript dissertation option outline example:

Chapter 1: Introduction: Clearly introduces the included manuscripts and how the manuscripts fit together as a cohesive body of work.

Chapter 2 (manuscript): Theoretical Framework/Systematic Review – accepted, published

Chapter 3 (manuscript): Data-based study 1 – submission-ready

Chapter 4 (manuscript): Data-based study 2 – submission-ready

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

- Students can use as many chapters as needed, but a minimum of five is required.
- References can be by chapter or for the full dissertation as decided by the student and advisor.
- All proposed research questions/aims must be addressed in the final dissertation.
- See prior University of Colorado Anschutz College of Nursing Manuscript Dissertation option exemplars below:
 - Raybin JL. Creative arts and physical posture: Exploration of decreasing the distress experienced by children with cancer. [Order No. 28414049]. University of Colorado Denver, Anschutz Medical Campus; 2021.
 - Baker CL. Systems of communication in care coordination for school-aged children. [Order No. 30487456]. University of Colorado Denver, Anschutz Medical Campus; 2023.

ProQuest dissertation copyright management: See the following website to evaluate necessary processes on case-by-case basis. https://support.proquest.com/s/article/What-is-an-embargo-and-why-would-I-want-to-place-one-on-my-paper?language=en_US&sfdclFrameOrigin=null

Resources:

<https://phdinahundredsteps.com/2015/05/26/spinning-the-golden-thread-that-can-sew-your-phd-together/>