

## APPENDIX C

### PhD CANDIDACY EXAMINATION PROCEDURES (Revised 2/2004/DAC)

#### A. EXPECTATIONS, GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING

##### Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set forth expectations, guidelines, criteria, resources and useful references for the preparation, and evaluation of College of Nursing PhD Candidacy examinations. The Candidacy Examination is an opportunity for students to demonstrate scholarship. Scholarship is defined as command of a subject that encompasses discovery, integration, application, and/or teaching of knowledge (Boyer, 1990). Characteristics of scholarliness include demonstrated understanding of the relationships among theory, research, practice, and philosophy. Scholarship also includes appreciation and understanding of the value of pluralism in paradigms, articulation of the boundaries and domains of practice, research, and nursing science and how these domains influence each other.

As a student progresses through the PhD program relationships among theory, research, philosophy, and practice become apparent through a synthesis of the discipline's different components. Over time, various course assignments contribute to this synthesis. For example, concept and philosophical analysis papers, integrative research reviews, analysis and critique of models, theories and research reports help the student synthesize existing knowledge from theoretical and data based literature. Based on this analysis and synthesis students gain the knowledge, skill and abilities to advance nursing science based on their own nursing research agenda. The candidacy examination provides students an opportunity to demonstrate what they know, and how they think, and how they have organized and integrated or synthesized issues. The written and oral defense components of the examination should provide evidence of mastery of content associated with a student's completion of the core nursing courses. The examination provides faculty with evidence of the student's mastery of knowledge, skill, and abilities necessary to conduct the research required at the dissertation stage of the program. The examination is an opportunity for the student to demonstrate they have the knowledge and values that support professional identity as a nurse scientist invested in the scholarly development of the discipline.

Faculty who evaluate candidacy exams are looking for evidence that the student is a critical thinker who can demonstrate synthesis and be advanced to the dissertation stage. Critical thinking is defined as purposeful self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as the explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based (Facione & Facione, 1996). Synthesis is the ability to put together various elements and parts so as to form a whole. Synthesis is the process of combining elements from many sources to put them together into a structure, pattern or product not clearly present before. The synthesis represents personal and professional

expression of disciplined inquiry. In order to synthesize one must develop some of the characteristics of an ideal thinker. The ideal thinker has been described as “habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open minded, flexible, fair minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider, clear about issues, orderly in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information, reasonable in the selection of criteria, focused in inquiry, and persistent in seeking results which are as precise as the subject and the circumstances of inquiry permit (Facione & Facione, 1996). The examination provides the student an opportunity to demonstrate these competencies.

The definition of critical thinking can be expanded and includes many sub-skills. Evidence that these skills are employed in the development of one’s ideas and oral defense is useful criteria for evaluation purposes. Critical thinking skills and sub-skills and corresponding elements are outlined below. In evaluating the examination faculty will pay attention to the presence or absence of these skills. Questions that you may want to consider as a means to help you reflect on your paper are outlined. Finally, an evaluation checklist faculty use in grading the examination is attached for your information.

### **Critical Thinking Skills**

**Interpretation: categorize, decode sentences, and clarify meaning.** Knowledge of specifics and ways and means for dealing with specific facts, trends, conventions, methods, theories, content relative to nursing theory and research given an identified phenomenon of concern.

**Analysis: examine ideas, identify arguments, and analyze arguments.** Analysis of concepts, principles, theories, methods, and relationships among concepts, theories, variables, measures, methods, and outcomes.

**Inference: query evidence, conjecture alternatives, draw conclusions.** Interpretation, explanation and discussion of implications, consequences, corollaries and effects. Derive logical consequences given analysis of the evidence, and consequential results.

**Explanation: state results, justify procedures, present arguments.** Inductive, deductive or retroductive development of propositions and their relationships or theoretical/conceptual framework associated with a research tradition.

**Evaluation: assess claims, assess arguments.** Ability to indicate logical fallacies and to compare work with standards or criteria relevant to state of the art scholarship and research based evidence.

**Synthesis.** Ability to draw upon many elements from many sources and put them together in a pattern or structure, plan, or communication not clearly present before -- a unique communication, a plan or proposed set of operations, derivation of a set of abstract relations based on disciplined inquiry.

**Self-regulation: self-examination, self-correction.** Ability to think about own thinking skills, evidence of self-monitoring, analyzing, predicting, planning, evaluation, and revising.

**Questions to Consider in Evaluation of the Written Examination.** Given these skills, several questions guide faculty and students in evaluating both the written and oral components of the examination. For example:

1. To what degree does the paper demonstrate knowledge of specifics and ways and means for dealing with specific facts, trends, conventions, methods, theories, content and process relative to nursing theory and research given the identified phenomenon of concern or issue raised by the question?
2. To what degree does the paper illustrate competent and critical analysis of concepts, principles, theories, methods, and relationships among the elements of the question or among concepts, theories, variables, measures, methods and outcomes associated with the subject matter of the paper?
3. To what degree is competence evident in the interpretation, explanation, and discussion of the implications, corollaries, consequences and effects of issues or observations raised in the paper?
4. To what degree is the student able to derive logical consequences from the analysis of evidence presented? Are the consequential results of that analysis adequately discussed and evaluated? Are the applications and relevancy of these issues for nursing science made explicit?
5. How specifically did the student present and justify arguments and state results? To what degree does the student adequately develop propositions, and relationships among ideas that are associated with the research traditions relevant to the topic of the paper or the issues and observations related to the question?
6. To what degree does the student express in writing or verbally the knowledge, values, and commitments, associated with being a nurse scientist?
7. To what degree do you think the student possesses the knowledge, skills and abilities to conduct independent research?
8. Does the paper demonstrate synthesis?
9. Should the student be advanced to candidacy status? If not, why not?

The checklist on the next page can assist faculty in determining the acceptability or unacceptable nature of the criteria identified.

### **References and Resources**

- Blackburn, S. (2000). Think. London: Oxford University Press.
- Boyer, E. (1990). Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities for the Professorate. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Brown, Sharon, Cohen, S, Kaeser, L et. al. (1995). Nursing perspective of Boyer's scholarship paradigm. Nurse Educator, 20, 5, 26-30.
- Chinn, P.L., & Kramer, M.K. (1999). Theory and Nursing: Integrated Knowledge Development (5<sup>th</sup> ed. ). St. Louis, MO: Mosby.
- Facione, N & Facione, P. (1996). Externalizing the critical thinking in knowledge development and clinical judgment, Nursing Outlook, 44,3,129-136.

Howard, V & Barton, J. (1986). Thinking on Paper. New York: William Morrow.  
 Meleis, A. (1997). Theoretical Nursing: Development and Progress (3rd ed.) Philadelphia: Lippincott.  
 Pinch, W. (1995). Synthesis: Implementing a complex process. Nurse Educator, 20, 1, 34-40.  
 Zinsser, W.K. (1994). On writing well. New York: Harper Perennial.

**Criteria for Grading Doctoral Candidacy Examination**

**Summary of Phases I and II**

Reader:

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall Rating:      Acceptable \_\_\_\_\_      Unacceptable \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: The ten criteria below are considered to be applicable across all areas. Acceptable ratings by two of the three panel members must be obtained for each area. Unacceptable ratings should be accompanied by rationale.

	<u>CRITERIA</u>	<u>ACCEPTABLE</u>	<u>UNACCEPTABLE</u>
1.	Demonstrated depth of knowledge	_____	_____
2.	Demonstrated analysis of knowledge	_____	_____
3.	Based answer on breadth of knowledge, (conceptual, clinical, and/or empirical).	_____	_____
4.	Synthesized relevant knowledge to support answer.	_____	_____
5.	Demonstrated critical thinking in assessing and answering the question.	_____	_____
6.	Demonstrated an ability to integrate experiential knowledge and own ideas with extant knowledge in the field.	_____	_____
7.	Presented the answer logically, derived logical consequences based on evidence.	_____	_____
8.	Articulated the answer clearly.	_____	_____

9. Supported the answer with pertinent references and resources (current, classic, significant). \_\_\_\_\_

10. Written and presented in a scholarly manner. \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments:

## **B. PhD CANDIDACY EXAMINATION PROCEDURES**

### **Eligibility**

Students take the PhD Candidacy Examination immediately following completion of the required core nursing theory (NURS 800, 801, 802), research (NURS 810, 811, 813), statistics, theory-research synthesis (NURS 803) and role (NURS 804) courses. The PhD candidacy examination process is discussed with precandidacy students during academic advisement sessions with the Graduate Director.

### **Application For The PhD Candidacy Examination**

PhD Candidacy Examination application forms and guidelines are available in the Office of Student Services (OSS) (Room 141). Applications must be completed and returned to the Student Services Coordinator of Graduate Programs (Room 141) on the second Monday of November for a January administration and the second Monday in March for a June Administration. The same procedure applies to retakes.

### **Examination Schedule And Procedures**

The PhD Candidacy Examination consists of a written paper (Phase I) and oral defense (Phase II) that are evaluated by a panel of three graduate faculty members. Phase I consists of generating and submitting a written paper addressing a question selected by graduate faculty. Phase II consists of defending the written paper to the faculty panel.

**Phase I.** The examination question is distributed to the student through the OSS (Room 141) on the first working day of the spring or summer semester. The student prepares a written paper that addresses all aspects of the question selected

The completed examination paper must be returned to the OSS (Room 141) one week later on the same day of the week on which the exam was distributed (e.g. Wed.-Wed., Thurs.-Thurs., etc.). The paper is to be typed and double-spaced, using APA's *Publication Manual* (current edition), and must be no longer than 30 pages, excluding bibliography.

The student may make special arrangements for the receipt of his/her examination questions and delivery of the completed paper. Such arrangements must be specified in

writing by the student and approved by the Graduate Director in advance of the examination date. The student is responsible for logistics and expenses related to such arrangements. Regardless of individual arrangements, the written paper must be received by 4:00 p.m. on the due date.

**Phase II.** When the student turns in the completed examination paper, a one-hour appointment is scheduled by the OSS with the student and the faculty panel for oral defense of the paper. The oral defense is held approximately two weeks following submission of the written paper.

The faculty panel, assigned by the Graduate Director reads the student's written paper and conducts the oral defense. The purpose of the oral examination is clarification, elaboration, and **defense** of the major ideas presented in the paper. The oral defense is taped and documentation of both portions of the examination is retained in the OSS, Room 141 until the student graduates. A faculty chair is appointed by the Graduate Director to convene the oral defense session and return copies of the written paper, tape, and evaluation results to the Student Services Coordinator of Graduate Programs (OSS).

### **Evaluation**

Faculty independently evaluate the written portion of the exam prior to conducting the oral defense. The examination result is determined by the faculty panel following the oral portion of the exam. Consensus must be achieved by at least 2 of the 3 faculty panel members in reading the paper and conducting the oral examination. The evaluation outcome may be "Pass," or "Fail."

A grade of Pass is awarded to the student who clearly demonstrates synthesis of nursing theory and research. The Pass rating is required for recommendation to candidacy.

A grade of Fail indicates that the student's presentation of ideas is not at an acceptable level of synthesis. The student who fails the candidacy examination obtains written feedback from the Graduate Director and the Faculty Panel Chair regarding performance and appropriate remediation with negotiated timeframes for remediation and reexamination.

### **Re-Examination**

The procedure for a second PhD Candidacy Examination is the same as for the original candidacy examination. The second examination date is planned to accommodate remediation recommendations. The procedure for administration and evaluation of the second candidacy examination is the same as with the first attempt. The student who fails the examination after two attempts is not admitted to candidacy for the PhD in Nursing Science and may not enroll for further doctoral level course work through the College of Nursing.

### **Notification Of Results**

PhD Candidacy Examination results are sent to the student by U.S. Mail from the Graduate Director. A copy of the letter is forwarded to the student's PhD mentor and

placed in the student's academic file in the College of Nursing. Notification of individual students' satisfactory examination performance is sent by the Graduate Director/Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to the Dean of the Graduate School for review and approval. The Dean of the Graduate School notifies the student of admission to PhD candidacy.