

2017-2018

Ph.D. in Nursing Program Student Handbook



VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

School of Nursing

Creating collaboration. Advancing science. Impacting lives.

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About this Handbook

This handbook is designed to be a resource for currently enrolled Ph.D. students at Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Nursing (SON) as well as the faculty of the Ph.D. Program in Nursing. This handbook supplements the VCU Graduate School Bulletin located at: <http://bulletin.vcu.edu/>. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the policies and information contained in each of these resources.

Welcome from the Dean



It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to the VCU School of Nursing. You have made a great investment in your future by selecting a school that is ranked among the top schools of nursing in the nation. We offer a supportive, collaborative environment to ensure your success as you progress through our program.

This handbook is a very important resource designed to provide you with information on life as a student at the VCU School of Nursing. Our highly trained faculty and staff will support you every step of the way and help you get the most out of your experience here. Graduates of our school represent the future of nursing and are well-prepared to improve the care of the patients we serve.

On behalf of the faculty and staff, I extend our best wishes for a dynamic and rewarding educational experience. Thank you for being a part of our tradition of nursing excellence.

Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Dean, School of Nursing

Welcome from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs



Congratulations on beginning or continuing your nursing education at the VCU School of Nursing. As the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (“chief academic officer”), I and the team of expert educators and professional staff are committed to assuring that you have a world class educational experience at VCU. In light of an ever changing and complex health care environment, we are constantly employing principals of continuous quality improvement, evolving pedagogical principal and best practices to assure that your academic program is cutting edge. We have much to learn from each other. Please let me know if I can ever be of service to you. A career in nursing is the gift that keeps on giving.

Debra J. Barksdale, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, 8CNE, FAANP, FAAN
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, School of Nursing

Welcome from the Program Director



On behalf of the faculty and staff of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to our Ph.D. program. We are excited that you have chosen to pursue a doctoral degree with us and know you will find a supportive and collegial community.

Our program embraces an interdisciplinary model of teaching and mentoring. You will be challenged to think in new ways as you become a nurse scholar and scientist and we will be there to guide you from coursework through dissertation and beyond.

Pursuing and obtaining a doctorate of philosophy in nursing will provide the knowledge and skills needed for you to further shape the discipline of nursing and improve health outcomes. We look forward to working with you.

Jo Lynne Robins, Ph.D., RN, ANP-BC, AHN-C, FAANP
Associate Professor
Ph.D. Program Director

School of Nursing Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

We shape the future of nursing through the power of education, discovery and collaboration.

Vision

VCU SON will be the destination for those committed to transforming health care.

Values

Integrity | Compassion | Diversity | Innovation | Collaboration

Faculty Program Roles

Associate Dean of Academic Affairs: The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA) serves as the chief academic officer at the School of Nursing and provides leadership in strategic planning for academic programs and curricular development.

Ph.D. Curriculum Committee: The Ph.D. Curriculum Committee (PCC) manages the Ph.D. program curriculum, which in turn is voted on by all nursing faculty.

Ph.D. Program Director: The Ph.D. Program Director (PD) is a member of the faculty who leads the delivery of the Ph.D. program and serves as liaison between the Ph.D. program faculty, the Ph.D. Curriculum Committee, and the ADAA.

Ph.D. Program Faculty: Doctorally prepared faculty that possess advanced knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with those critical elements recognized in the AACN Indicators of Quality in Research-focused Doctoral Programs in Nursing.

Ph.D. Student Advisor: Doctorally prepared faculty assigned to Ph.D. students; responsible for fostering the best possible learning environment to achieve Ph.D. student learning outcomes.

Dissertation Committee: A group of 4 or more professionals chosen by the Ph.D. student and dissertation chair, whose goal is to provide oversight and guidance for the individual student's dissertation project.

Ph.D. Program Coordinator: Assists the ADAA in meeting the objectives of the Office of Academic Programs, supports the Ph.D. Program and Ph.D. students.

Office of Academic Programs: The Office of Academic Programs (OAP) provides support for all academic programs and school curriculum committees, including curriculum development and implementation, and faculty governance.

Office of Student Success: The Office of Student Success (OSS) provides support in the following areas: student recruitment, admissions, enrollment management, academic programs, student onboarding, advising and progression, student support, and graduation activities for undergraduate and graduate students in the School of Nursing.

Program Overview

The VCU School of Nursing doctor of philosophy program in nursing prepares scholars to develop knowledge in the discipline of nursing to become scholars or pioneering researchers committed to the highest ideals of nursing excellence. The program examines knowledge development in nursing through an understanding of the impact of a wide range of historical influences on the discipline and through analysis of how emerging societal issues influence knowledge development. Knowledge in the humanities and social sciences and an understanding of knowledge development in other disciplines is viewed as foundational to a full understanding of knowledge development in nursing. Methodologic competency (i.e., knowledge of research designs, methodologies, and tools) is also essential to a full understanding of the scope, range, and path of knowledge development and the relevance to nursing practice.

The online Ph.D. program includes a combination of online courses and on campus immersions each semester to offer students a dynamic, interactive learning experience that will prepare them to become nurse scholars and scientists. This format is designed to expand the Ph.D. program's reach to a wider range of highly motivated, independent students who aspire to become scholars, make a significant difference in the field of nursing and study with nationally recognized nurse scientists. During the first year of the BS to Ph.D. program, there are some required face-to-face courses.

A. Outcomes of Graduates

All Ph.D. Graduates will be able to:

1. Synthesize and critically appraise extant knowledge and theory.
2. Design, conduct, and disseminate theoretically sound research that is relevant, rigorous, culturally competent, and consistent with standards of scientific integrity.
3. . Lead and collaborate in team science to develop knowledge that enhances health in ways that reflect nursing's unique perspective.
4. Communicate effectively to the scientific community, policy makers, and the public through appropriate scholarly mechanisms.

B. Technical Standards

The VCU School of Nursing is responsible for providing education without regard to disability while assuring that academic and technical standards are met. This document defines the non-academic criteria for advancement through graduation from the Nursing Ph.D. program at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing.

The following technical standards describe the essential functions that a student is expected to demonstrate in order to fulfill the requirement of the nursing education program, and thus, are required for advancement through and graduation from the program. The technical standards for each category identified below are consistent with the expectations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, including the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. The technical skill areas include motor, sensory/observation, communication, cognitive and behavioral. Since the Ph.D. program does not involve clinical components or direct patient care, some aspects of the standards may be modified.

Students must read and sign this document before matriculation into the VCU School of Nursing. It is incumbent upon the student to review these technical standards on a regular basis to ensure continued compliance. If a student finds that they are unable to be in compliance with technical standards for an acute or chronic condition, they should speak with their academic advisor and pertinent course faculty immediately.

1. Motor Skills

- A student must be able to coordinate gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and the functional use of the senses of touch and vision reasonably to operate a computer keyboard and to read a computer screen or have appropriate accommodation.
- A student must be able to maneuver in the research setting

2. Sensory/Observation

- A student must be able to hear with or without devices of assistance to elicit information from patients, faculty, and professionals.
- A student must be able to listen and send clear messages

3. Communications

- A student must possess written and verbal fluency in the English language to elicit information from and provide information to patients, faculty and health care professionals.
- A student must be able to comprehend written communications such as the ability to read, understand and follow directions in the English language to fulfill the required tasks and duties of a Ph.D. student.
- A student must be able to network with other professionals and demonstrate the ability to engage with appropriate non-verbal and verbal communication.

4. Cognitive

- A student must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze and synthesize complex information to solve problems.
- A student must be able to integrate didactic and experiential learning to solve problems with critical judgment and analysis.

5. Behavioral

- A student must possess the mental health required for full use of his/her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment and the prompt completion of all responsibilities.
- A student must be able to develop and sustain mature, sensitive and effective relationships with a web of faculty, colleagues and other health care professionals
- A student must be able to tolerate and function effectively under stress
- A student must be able to concentrate in the presence of distracting conditions
- A student must be able to concentrate for prolonged periods of time
- A student must be able to relate in a professional manner to patients, families, faculty and other health care professionals
- A student must be able to accept constructive feedback and demonstrate a willingness to respond appropriately
- A student must be able to read and regulate emotions as well as to recognize their impact on work performance and relationships, especially in the face of angry or emotionally-charged people
- A student must be able to adapt to and be flexible with changing environments, uncertainty, and ambiguity
- A student must be able to display compassion, empathy, honesty, integrity, interpersonal skills and motivation consistently
- A student must be able to acquire transportation for on and off-campus classes or meetings outside Virginia Commonwealth University

Pre-Enrollment

A. Criminal Background Check and Drug Screening

Policy

An offer of acceptance to the VCU School of Nursing (SON) is conditioned upon the successful completion of a criminal background check (CBC) and drug screening. Students are also required to complete this process upon program re-entry subsequent to a leave of absence, program withdrawal or program separation greater than thirty consecutive days.

After enrollment, all students must report any felony, misdemeanor, or court martial charges and convictions to the Assistant Dean of Enrollment & Student Services, which occur during their enrollment within 10 business days of occurrence. For criminal charges, a review committee will consider the nature of the underlying conduct resulting in the charge and make the determination as to whether to suspend the student pending resolution of the criminal proceeding. Criminal charges, by themselves, will not necessarily warrant denial of continued enrollment.

Rationale

The SON requires CBC and drug screening for all students prior to enrollment. Background checks and drug screening are conducted to ensure that nursing students are competent, safe, and trustworthy to engage in clinical rotations and other critical aspects of the programs.

The SON also conducts the screenings to:

- Respond to regulatory mandates and the requirements of the School of Nursing's affiliated clinical facilities.
- Bolster the continuing trust of the public in the nursing profession.

Procedure

The CBC and drug screening are a mandatory component of the pre-matriculation process. The final decision regarding matriculation of an applicant will be based on the information in the CBC/drug screening reports.

Factors involved in the final decision may include, but are not limited to:

1. The nature, circumstances, and frequency of any reported offense(s).
2. The length of time since the offense(s).
3. Available information that addresses efforts at rehabilitation.
4. The accuracy of the information provided by the applicant.

Individuals who do not give permission to the conduct of the criminal background check/drug screening or who fail to provide the reports as required will not be allowed to matriculate in the School of Nursing.

- An independent vendor has been identified by the SON to provide the criminal background and drug screening. Each applicant will be responsible for requesting the report and submitting payment for the report.
- The CBC and drug screening report shall span the prior seven-year period, and shall include all convictions at a felony or misdemeanor level.

- The information obtained through the CBC and drug screening will not become part of a student's academic file and will remain confidential unless the findings result in an institutional action by the SON.
- The CBC and drug screening document will be destroyed upon the student's graduation/separation from the institution.
- The vendor sends the CBC and drug screening reports electronically to the Office of Enrollment and Student Services (OESS) in any decision that may adversely affect the individual.
- Validated background reports found to be in conflict with responses in the application may be grounds for withdrawal of an offer of enrollment based upon submission of false or misleading information on the application.
- The existence of a conviction or a positive drug screen will not necessarily result in a denial of enrollment to the School of Nursing. Instead each case will be reviewed by a committee other than the admissions committee and evaluated on its facts.
 - The admission of students with a conviction or a positive drug screen who are granted entry into VCUSON may not be able to complete the program if their conviction prevents securement of clinical practicum sites.
 - Additionally, students are advised that nursing licensure and subsequent prescription and DEA certification (for NP students) are not guaranteed upon graduation and board certification, but are considered by the state board of nursing in which the individual is applying.

Review Committee

The review committee shall include, but is not limited to the:

- Assistant Dean for Enrollment and Student Services,
- Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (or other administrative dean),
- Two faculty members and,
- University attorney as needed to clarify legal processes.

The review committee is responsible for making determinations regarding acceptance or denial of enrollment and communicating the determination to the student.

- Any determination to deny enrollment will be communicated to the student in writing, giving the reason for the denial and allowing the student five business days from the date the communication was sent to respond to the determination before it becomes final.
- The student's response should be sent to the Assistant Dean of Enrollment and Student Services and should include any relevant information concerning the CBC and/or drug screen to be considered by the committee, including any challenge to the accuracy of the report.
- The committee shall consider the response, and shall issue a final determination within 72 hours of receiving the student's response.

VCU School of Nursing Disqualifying Criminal Offenses

Felonies

1. A crime of violence.
2. Any felony offense involving unlawful sexual behavior.
3. Any felony, the underlying basis of which has been found by the court on the record to include an act of domestic violence.
4. Any felony of child abuse.

5. Any felony offense in another state, the elements which are substantially similar to the elements of any of the above offenses.

Misdemeanors

- C. Third degree assault.
- D. Any misdemeanor, the underlying factual basis of which has been found by the court on the record to include an act of domestic violence.
- E. A misdemeanor offense of child abuse.
- F. Any misdemeanor offense of sexual assault on a client by a psychotherapist.
- G. Any misdemeanor offense in another state, the elements of which are substantially similar to the elements of any of the misdemeanor offenses listed above.

Criminal Histories

1. Convictions/deferred adjudications involving crimes against persons (physical or sexual abuse, neglect, assault, murder, etc.).
2. Convictions related to moral turpitude (prostitution, public lewdness/exposure, etc.).
3. Convictions/deferred adjudications related to the sale, possession, distribution, or transfer of narcotics or controlled substances.
4. Registered sex offenders.

B. Student Verification Form

Prior to beginning the program, the students will read and sign the Student Verification Form that will remain in the student's file in the Office of Academic Programs. A copy of this form can be found in **Appendix A**.

C. Health and Certification Requirements

Students enrolled in online programs will comply with the immunization requirements outlined in the **VCU Certificate of Immunization**. Students may be required to present documentation of additional immunizations for practicum and research experiences.

Students may be required to present documentation of additional immunizations for practicum and research experiences.

See University Student Health Services/Immunizations for additional information

(<http://www.students.vcu.edu/health/immunizations/>). All requirements apply to full- and part-time students and must be submitted to the University prior to enrollment.

D. School of Nursing Scholarships and Other Student Support Application Process

Students applying for School of Nursing scholarships must complete a School Scholarship Application. Students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be eligible for need based scholarship funds. To be eligible for any scholarship support, the student must meet requirements specific to the scholarship for which they are applying. The deadline for receipt of applications will be published annually by the School of Nursing.

School of Nursing Ph.D. Scholarships

The School of Nursing has scholarships for incoming and returning full-time Ph.D. students in coursework. The application for these scholarships can be found on the [SON's website](#).

Enrollment Credit Hours for Scholarship Eligibility

For school-based scholarship purposes, full-time students must be enrolled for a minimum of nine credit hours in the fall and spring semesters and three credit hours in the summer semester, plus meet any additional requirements specific to the scholarship for which they are applying.

Tuition Support

The VCU School of Nursing provides tuition support for coursework to selected Ph.D. nursing students who are enrolled in a full-time plan of study (9 credits in fall and spring and 3 credits in summer). All university and program fees are the responsibility of the student. Students in the M.S. to Ph.D. program are eligible for 2 years of support; B.S. to Ph.D. students are eligible for 3 years of support. Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress (GPA of at least 3.0) to receive this support.

Enrollment

A. Academic Advising

The process of academic advisement is one of information exchange, communication, teaching, and guidance. Upon admission, an academic advisor is assigned by the Ph.D. Program Director. Consideration is given to student preference, match of faculty and student research interests, and faculty availability, as well as the faculty member's agreement to be the student's advisor. The academic advisor typically will be the Dissertation Chairperson.

Collaboratively, the student and advisor develop an individualized comprehensive plan that meets the degree requirements and the student's research and educational goals. Through the progression of the Ph.D. program, the student and the advisor have joint responsibility for insuring that each step in fulfilling degree requirements is completed and that an official record is kept.

Responsibility of the Advisor

1. Guide students through their program of study and help them navigate the university system and processes. The advisor insures the advisee receives relevant notices, is available on a regular basis for questions or consultation, and helps the student manage opportunities and challenges related to educational progress.
2. Approves activities that satisfy course and program requirements.
3. Monitor students' progress and performance including approving any changes to program of study (POS) plan.
4. Facilitate students' participation in professional meetings and organizations and assist with dissemination of the student's work, including preparation, presentation and publication.
5. Mentor students into the role of nurse scholars and scientists.
6. Assist students in developing goals for the doctoral program and future career planning.

Responsibility of the Student

- 1 Scheduling meetings (in person, via phone or through email) with their advisor at least once per semester to plan coursework for the following semester and progression through the program.
- 2 Meet with their advisor in person during on campus [immersion] sessions at the beginning of each semester.
- 3 Submit any changes to the program of study (POS) plan.

- 4 Seek out opportunities for participation in professional meetings and organizations and dissemination.
- 5 Engage the advisor in his/her development of goals for the doctoral program and future career plans.

Once a student has successfully passed the comprehensive examination, the student's advisor becomes the Dissertation Chair or will assist the student in identifying a Dissertation Chairperson.

Changing Advisors

Sometimes another faculty member may offer a better match for the student's research interests than the advisor initially assigned. The student or advisor may request a change. To initiate the change in advisors, the student must obtain approval and signatures from the program director, current advisor, and the new advisor using the Ph.D. Student Advisor Change Form (Appendix G) which is submitted to the Ph.D. program coordinator.

B. Degree Requirements

A minimum of 61 graduate credit hours are required for the M.S. to Ph.D. in Nursing program and 91 graduate credit hours are required for the B.S. to Ph.D. in Nursing.

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements, a candidate for the Ph.D. in nursing must be recommended by the faculty and must:

1. Meet academic requirements of the Graduate School;
2. Complete all requirements for the prescribed curriculum within eight years of the first registration for coursework to be credited toward the degree;
3. Earn a minimum grade of B or pass grade in all nursing courses;
4. Earn a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all work presented for graduation;
5. Conform to School of Nursing policies in respect to pass/fail grading for coursework.

The degree will be granted only after all requirements have been fulfilled and all fees to the university have been paid. Degrees are not granted in absentia unless written request is made to the dean and permission is granted.

See **Appendix B** for plans of study

C. Course Registration

Students should be aware of registration dates set by the university. Students in coursework must be registered for courses prior to the first day of on campus sessions. Full-time students in coursework must be registered for at least nine credit hours each fall and spring semesters and at least three credit hours in the summer semester. More information regarding course registration and minimum/maximum credit hours for graduate students can be found at: [VCU Bulletin](#).

Students that are preparing to take the comprehensive exam or are in dissertation phase, must be registered for courses prior to the University's course registration deadline (dates are located on the [Academic Calendar](#)). Students preparing to take the comprehensive exam (oral and/or written) following completion of all required coursework, should enroll in NURS 796: Directed Research Experience. Once a student has successfully completed and passed the comprehensive examination (written and oral) and is approved to begin dissertation research, registration for dissertation credits (NURS 898) apply.

NURS 796 is a variable credit course. At least 1 credit of NURS 796 must be taken while completing the comprehensive exam if not taken during coursework. Additional credits of NURS 796 are decided upon by student and advisor depending on additional work that can be accomplished in the semester following successful completion of the comprehensive exam.

C. Non Degree Seeking Students

Students who have not been admitted to the School of Nursing may enroll in nursing courses. Permission to enroll in courses is granted by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Only six credits earned as a non-degree seeking student can be used for the Ph.D. in Nursing.

Decisions for enrollment are based on permission of the instructor, space availability, and designation of the course as open to non-degree seeking students.

D. The Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus)

The VCU School of Nursing is a member of NEXus (The Nursing Education Xchange). NEXus is a collaboration between participating doctoral programs in nursing that allows doctoral students enrolled at member colleges and universities to take courses that may not be offered at his/her home institution for a common price.

Guidelines:

- A Ph.D. student can take a maximum of 12 credits of Ph.D. level courses through NEXus to satisfy SON Ph.D. curriculum requirements if the required course is not offered at VCU.
- Biobehavioral and Healthcare Quality core courses (720, 721, 725, 731, and 732) need to be taken at VCU, they cannot be replaced with a NEXus course.

Visit the [NEXus](#) website for additional course information, registration deadlines and dates.

Academic Policies

A. Paper Format

Unless otherwise stated by the instructor, the most recent *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)* is to be used for all papers written in the School of Nursing.

B. Grading Scale

A ten-point grading scale will be used in all graduate courses.

A 90 – 100

B 80 – 89

C 70 – 79

D 60 – 69

F Below 60

Courses that receive grades of Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (U), Pass (P), or Fail (F):

NURS 792 – P/F

NURS 796 – P/F

NURS 797 – P/F

NURS 898 – S/U/F

Refer to the Graduate School Bulletin for the Grading system:
<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate-students/grades/>.

C. Course Grades of "C"

A student who receives a first grade of "C" or below in any graduate course required for graduation must repeat the course. The course must be repeated before taking any courses for which the course in question is a prerequisite. A student who receives a second course grade of "C" in any graduate course is terminated from the graduate program.

Students should be aware that following any failure to meet progression standards, placement in clinical courses is not guaranteed and is made on a space-available basis.

Students will receive official communication from the school related to course grades of "C" or below. The Ph.D. Program Director will request a meeting with students who earn a grade of "C" or below to help them make plans for continuing in the program.

D. Testing Procedures

Examinations and standardized tests are essential measures of competence and knowledge and integral to assuring that students provide safe and effective patient care. The School of Nursing has established the following requirements to assure the integrity of the testing environment.

Students sitting for in-person examinations are expected to:

- Arrive at the designated room on time.
- Place all books, coats, purses, etc. at the front of the classroom.
- Turn cell phones off and place securely in backpack or purse.
- Remove virtual reality glasses/goggles or electronic "smart" watches
- Remove hats, hoodies, and jackets with large pockets.
- Leave bottled beverages with labels with backpack/purse (only bottled water is allowed).
- If calculators are permitted, only freestanding pocket calculators are allowed. Cell phones cannot be used as a calculator. In computer based examinations, a calculator is embedded within the software.
- If computer based examination, refrain from opening any computer program other than the one to take the examination.
- Report any misconduct or annoying behavior to the faculty/ proctor during the examination so appropriate action may be taken.
- If provided with a GradeIt type paper test, credit is given to the answers on the answer sheet and will not be given for any item erroneously transposed.
- Place name and VCU student identification number (vID) on the answer sheet and the test booklet when the paper is used and return it to the faculty or proctor.
- Use the restroom prior to sitting for the examination. Students who must use the restroom during an examination will be accompanied by a proctor at all times.
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity and not utilize textbooks, notecards or personal assistance during the examination process.

If suspected of cheating, the student's examination will be removed. In accordance with VCU policy, students suspected of cheating will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

Missed Examinations

In the event of a personal emergency (e.g., unexpected illness, death in the family) or participation in a University activity (which meets the VCU Student Handbook criteria for an excused absence) the student must notify the course faculty in advance. In advance is defined as ***prior to the beginning of the examination for a personal emergency*** or ***at least 2 weeks in advance if the student is participating in a University event.*** Students should notify the course faculty using the method preferred by course faculty (e.g., phone call, email). Examinations will not be given to students who have not provided timely notification of a SON-accepted absence and will result in a grade of "0" on that examination.

Examinations may be made up only in the case of absences for reasons acceptable to the course faculty.

The make-up examination will be taken within one week of the scheduled examination or at the discretion of the course faculty. The student must make arrangements for the make-up examination with the course faculty. An exception may be made for student absences of one week or more with the concurrence of faculty and program director. Make-up examinations may be a different version of the original examination.

Standardized examinations (e.g., HESI) can only be administered at the designated time and cannot be made-up.

Online Testing

- Quizzes and examinations will be administered online unless otherwise specified by faculty. At course faculty discretion, quizzes and examinations may be administered in a proctored learning environment.
- Unless otherwise specified by course faculty, students may not use textbooks, notebooks, or audio, visual, or written input from others.
- Students taking quizzes and examinations online are required to work independently. Work submitted online must be work completed by the student only. Students should not take quizzes or examinations with a partner or receive input or assistance from another student or individual.
- Quizzes and examinations that are given online will have a date and time limitations for when the examination will be available. Any student who fails to take the quiz or examination during the time frame allotted will receive a grade of "0" for that assessment.
- All examinations and quizzes must *only* be taken by the student enrolled in the course.

Students Requiring Testing Accommodations

Students who have been granted a letter of testing accommodations in accordance with Federal Laws,* will generally take all scheduled *in person* examinations at the Division of Academic Success offices (VMI Building 1000 E. Marshall St). This will assure a testing environment that addresses the student's specific accommodation need.

*American Disabilities Act 1990, amended 2008; Rehabilitation Act 1973

E. Unsatisfactory Dissertation Progression

A student who receives a grade of "U" in NURS 898, Dissertation, will receive a warning letter from the Office of Academic Programs copied to the dissertation advisor. The student must expeditiously meet with the dissertation advisor to develop and document a written plan for dissertation progress

and improvement. A student who earns a second "U" in NURS 898 will be terminated from the program.

F. Grade Appeals

The School of Nursing follows the university guidelines with the exception of spring grades. For grades awarded in the spring semester, the written appeal must be submitted no later than 14 days after the beginning of the summer semester. Refer to the VCU Grade Review Procedure for additional information.

G. Separation from the School of Nursing

Before separating from the School of Nursing, the student must drop/withdraw all nursing courses. The student should contact the University registrar for any additional guidance and requirements for separation from the school.

H. Readmission after Dismissal from the Graduate Program

Following dismissal from the Ph.D. program, students are not eligible for readmission.

I. Timeline from Admission to Graduation

The time limit for completion of the Ph.D. program is eight years.

J. Withdrawal from courses

Please refer to university policy (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/>). Students should consult with course faculty and the program coordinator prior to withdrawing from a course.

K. Leave of Absence

Once enrolled in the Ph.D. Nursing program, students are required to follow their plan of study. In the event that a student needs a period of time away from the program, the student must submit a written request for a leave of absence by completing the Leave of Absence Form (**Appendix H**). The form should be submitted to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator. LOAs will be considered on an individual basis.

Students are expected to complete their degree within 8 years from the time they begin the program, as this is the official policy of the University. A LOA does not extend the 8-year requirement for program completion. Students must consider that if an extended leave is taken, program changes may occur that influence progression. Students must also be aware that a leave of absence will necessitate the completion of a revised curriculum plan based on how the LOA impacts the curriculum plan of study at the time of the request because the student will no longer be able to follow the exact curriculum plan that was in place prior to the leave. Per School of Nursing policy, students are required to complete a criminal background check and drug screen upon program re-entry subsequent to a leave of absence, program withdrawal or program separation greater than thirty consecutive days.

Additional Information for Those Requesting a Leave of Absence for Health-related

Reasons: If a student needs to request a leave of absence for health reasons, the student must provide a physician's note to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator prior to the start of the LOA. The student will also need to provide a physician's note upon their return to the program, stating that the student is fit to return to school.

L. Communicating Issues and Concerns

The School of Nursing strives to create an atmosphere that facilitates communication between students and faculty and maximizes student learning and achievement. If students have issues/concerns regarding their courses, clinical experiences or any aspect of their academic program, they are expected to demonstrate professionalism in addressing their issues/concerns to the appropriate person(s). The academic advisor (for undergraduate students) or appropriate Program Director can assist students in navigating the appropriate steps.

The following steps will aid in effectively communicating issues and concerns.

1. The student should first meet with and discuss the issue/concern with the faculty member directly related to the issue/concern. (If the student feels uncomfortable addressing the issue/concern directly with that individual, the student may proceed to step 2. However, faculty have a right to be informed of student issues/concerns that involve them.)
2. If the issue/concern remains unresolved after step 1, the student should meet with the Program Director to discuss the issue/concern. The Program Director will review the issue/concern and a) facilitate a resolution with course faculty for course-related issues/concerns and/or b) refer the issue/concern to the appropriate Department Chair for faculty related issues.
3. If the issue/concern remains unresolved after step 2, the student should meet with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to discuss the issue/concern.
4. If additional actions are indicated, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs will direct the student to the Dean and other university-level processes, as appropriate.

M. Unprofessional Conduct

In addition to those standards of conduct described in the Rules and Procedures of Virginia Commonwealth University and the VCU Medical Center Code of Conduct, a student may be suspended or dismissed from the school for failure to meet academic requirements or failure to exhibit the attitudes and skills deemed necessary to function as a professional nurse. The School of Nursing recognizes its responsibility to the nursing profession and to the health care consumer. Therefore, any action by a nursing student considered to be unprofessional conduct shall be deemed cause for disciplinary action.

Unprofessional conduct may be defined as, but is not limited to:

- Fraud or deceit in filing application for admission to school such as false representation on the application.
- An act that violates the accepted social norms regarding conduct of one person towards another.
- Social norms refer to the laws, written or unwritten, that protects the individual and/or his/her property from unwanted acts of another such as stealing, lying, cheating, and slander.
- Conviction of a felony.

N. Retention of Course/Clinical Materials:

Students are strongly encouraged to keep a portfolio of course and clinical materials from each course taken throughout their program of study. Information from such courses may be valuable in seeking certification, licensure, and employment after graduation. Some states require detailed information about the course and clinical work including course outlines for licensure. Some examples of information that may be useful to keep include course syllabi, evaluations from instructors and preceptors, logs, major papers, and case studies.

Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination

Purpose:

The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to evaluate the student's ability to synthesize foundational knowledge in theory, methods, and his or her area of study in preparation for launching a program of research as a beginning scientist. The comprehensive examination consists of two components, a written and an oral component. The written component must be passed in order to move to the oral component, which focuses primarily on clarification of results. If the student fails the written component, there will be one opportunity to retake it. The oral component will be conducted with the student either in person or via video conference. Both components of the Comprehensive Exam must be passed to apply for candidacy.

Procedure:

Timing of the Comprehensive Exam and Readiness to Take the Exam

Students will take the exam in the last semester of required course work or later. If the Comprehensive Examination occurs after the semester in which the last course work was taken, the student has to register for an additional credit the semester in which the exam is taken. The advisor is responsible for determining in consultation with the student and the Ph.D. Program Director when the student is ready to take the exam. The specific dates of the comp exam will be determined by the student and advisor.

Application to Take the Comprehensive Exam

After approval for readiness to take the exam, the student will complete the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Request form and submit it to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator. The student is required to obtain a signature on the form from the advisor verifying readiness and eligibility to take the exam as outlined above.

Comprehensive Exam Committee

Three members of the student's proposed dissertation committee, each of whom has specific expertise, in theory, methods, and/or the student's area of study, will serve on the comprehensive exam committee. The student's advisor (i.e., the intended dissertation committee chair) will be a member of the committee, but the committee will be chaired by an individual who is NOT the student's intended dissertation chair. After the Comprehensive Exam Committee is appointed, the exact dates for the exam will be determined.

Comprehensive Exam Statement

In preparation for the Comprehensive Exam, the student prepares a 4-5 page double-spaced Comprehensive Exam Statement, accompanied by references, under the guidance of the advisor. The purpose of the statement is to outline the student's defined area of research expertise based on courses taken, enrichment and other activities in the area of study, and the intended research focus. The statement will be used by the Comprehensive Exam Committee to help develop questions for the exam. The statement should begin with a brief description of the student's content area, followed by a summary of coursework and other experiences that helped develop the student's expertise. It is important that the statement cover conceptual, methodological, and substantive aspects of the student's content area. Papers, projects, and/or professional dissemination accomplishments (e.g., poster, abstract presentation) related to these areas should be mentioned. The student finalizes the statement with the advisor, who shares it with the Comprehensive Exam Committee for review. After obtaining input, the student will finalize and distribute the statement to all members.

Questions for the examination

The formulation of questions for each student's exam is the responsibility of the Comprehensive Exam Committee. Each committee member reads the comprehensive exam statement and then develops 1-2 questions for discussion among the entire committee. These questions are framed around the student's research area. The committee then discusses, refines, and finalizes 3-4 questions that will comprehensively test knowledge of theory, methods, and the student's area of study. These questions are administered in a paper format which the student then has two weeks to complete in open-book fashion. The exam should include the VCU Honor Code. The Ph.D. Program Director will maintain a bank of previously asked questions for use by the Comprehensive Exam Committee in developing questions.

Format of the examination

Students have two weeks to write a 20-30 page paper, double spaced using 12-point font and 1" margins, in clear scientific style using APA style for citations and references. Responses to questions should be comprehensive and without redundancy. References should be cited, but are not included in the 20-30- page limit. If the written component exceeds 30 pages, only 30 pages plus references will be provided to the Comprehensive Exam Committee. The student's name, V-number, and the page number should appear at the top right corner of each page. This original paper must be written independently and must demonstrate a coherent response and the synthesis of ideas. The completed paper must be submitted in pdf format and returned by email attachment to the Program Coordinator, no later than 5:00 pm EST on the date specified. Specific instructions for submission, as well as deadline date and time, are provided to the student when the Comprehensive Exam questions are released to the student.

Evaluation of the examination

The examination consists of both a written and an oral component. The written component of the examination will be evaluated by the examining committee as Pass (Exceptional or Acceptable) or Does Not Pass (Not Acceptable). If the written component is scored as Pass, the examination progresses to the oral component. If the written component is evaluated as Exceptional across all standards¹ the oral examination will be waived. If the written component is scored Does Not Pass, the student cannot proceed to the oral component. There will be one opportunity to retake the written component. The oral component generally will be held three weeks after the written examination is submitted. If the student fails the oral component, one retake is permitted (refer to the Graduate School policies). The student must receive a pass on both the written and the oral components in order to advance to candidacy status. Failure to pass the written or oral comprehensive examination after the second attempt will result in dismissal from the Ph.D. program.

¹ Standards are as follows: Standard I: Knowledge Development, Philosophical Assumptions and Theoretical Framework, Standard II: Research Trajectory, Research Design and Methods, Standard III: Overall Synthesis and Technical Aspects.

Ph.D. Dissertation

A. General Information on the Dissertation Process

- All required courses must be completed before taking the comprehensive examination.
- The dissertation proposal defense cannot be scheduled until successful completion of the comprehensive examination.
- A Ph.D. student who has completed course requirements for a degree must register for a **minimum of one credit** at VCU each semester until the degree is awarded. Credit hours will be negotiated with the dissertation advisor. Refer to the VCU policies on continuous enrollment. Students must be enrolled during their graduation semester.
- A Ph.D. student may submit a letter of request for dissertation support funds to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs after successfully defending the proposal. A complete budget should be included with the request.
- All dissertation credits taken as part of the final project (thesis/dissertation/project) for awarding a graduate degree are to be graded each semester as "S," "U" or "F." Refer to the official School of Nursing policy on unsatisfactory dissertation progression.
- Ph.D. candidates may add the title Ph.D., and chose to be referred to as doctor, as soon as he or she has successfully defended the dissertation and submitted the final version through the university.
- Please refer to the VCU Graduate School's [Thesis and dissertation guidelines](#) .

B. Dissertation Preparation Phase

Using input from advisor and faculty members, the student will:

- Formulate an increasingly clear idea for the direction of the dissertation throughout coursework and NRSA or other proposals.
- Seek input from a variety of faculty members concerning the significance of ideas considered and bodies of literature to review. The faculty members will include those in the SON and possibly content or method specialists in other schools.
- Add coursework as needed to strengthen content or method knowledge.

C. Dissertation Committee

The role of the dissertation committee is to guide the student through the dissertation process and determine that a Ph.D. candidate's dissertation is acceptable for a Ph.D. degree as laid out in the university's graduate handbook.

The dissertation committee must consist of a minimum of four members. The Dissertation Chairperson must be a Ph.D. program faculty member in the School of Nursing who is either tenured or on tenure track with an established program of research and prior experience on dissertation committees. As soon as the student has identified a research focus (or research question), a potential dissertation chairperson is selected along with potential committee members; however, formal approval of the Dissertation Chairperson is required once a student has successfully passed the comprehensive examination.

The identification and selection of the Dissertation Chairperson is initiated by the student and the selection of this individual is dependent upon mutual agreement of the student and the faculty member who is asked to guide the dissertation research. The choice of the Dissertation Chairperson should be made based on the student's proposed area of research and the faculty member's expertise and scholarly interests. The Dissertation Chairperson assumes primary responsibility for assisting the student in developing a continued plan of study, monitoring the student's progress, and guiding the student throughout the dissertation process.

The Dissertation Chairperson guides the student in building a committee with the requisite knowledge and expertise in successfully executing the dissertation process. Other dissertation committee members must include one faculty member from outside the School of Nursing and may be outside of VCU. The dissertation committee is approved by the Advisor, Program Director, and then the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA) in the School of Nursing. Ph.D. student candidates must submit the Dissertation Committee Approval Form to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator. Ph.D. student candidates are to schedule a meeting not less than once a semester (three times a year). Guidelines for the dissertation chair and committee members are located in **Appendix E**.

More information on establishing the dissertation committee (not policy):

- Before the student enrolls in more than one credit of dissertation credits, with the advice of the chair, the Ph.D. student must select the dissertation committee, which is composed of faculty members who can support and guide the student through a major research project. It is important for the Ph.D. student to select a dissertation chair, and the members of the dissertation committee, from graduate faculty who have experience in the student's field of interest.
- The student must complete the **Dissertation Committee Approval Form** and obtain signatures of committee members. The student must return the signed form to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator for review and approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.
- If the Associate Dean disapproves of the composition of the Ph.D. student's committee, an appointment will be made with the student to discuss the reasons and to help the student identify alternative dissertation committee members.
- It is the student's responsibility to schedule a committee meeting not less often than once a semester after the committee has been appointed.
- As the work evolves, a student may change the membership of their committee, assuming the committee is still composed acceptably, up until a proposal is defended. This must be done with the consultation of their chair. If a student wishes to change the chair of the committee, they must schedule a meeting with the ADAA to discuss. Requests to change either the chair or a member of the dissertation committee must be submitted on the **Dissertation Committee Member Change Form**. This form should be completed and returned to Fonda Neal, Ph.D. Program Coordinator, who will obtain the associate dean's signature on the student's behalf.

D. Dissertation Requirements

The student must conduct a substantial independent investigation and prepare a dissertation reporting the results of this research and analyzing its significance in relation to existing scientific knowledge. An oral defense is conducted by the student's dissertation committee. The student is responsible for preparing the dissertation in accord with the most current version of the School of Graduate Studies' guidelines.

E. Dissertation Proposal and Proposal Defense

Students will use the **Dissertation Proposal Checklist** as a tool to ensure they are completing all required steps and meeting established deadlines.

Ph.D. students work with the dissertation committee to develop a strong dissertation proposal, which will serve as the foundation for the research project.

Development of a dissertation proposal can start at any time in the Ph.D. program; however, the dissertation proposal defense occurs at the time the dissertation committee has assessed that the proposal is strong enough to support the implementation of the research project.

The proposal defense date must be compatible with the schedules of the dissertation committee members. Students may not schedule the final defense unless all committee members can attend. The student must be present in-person at the School of Nursing for the proposal defense and final dissertation defense.

Once the dissertation proposal defense date is established, a room must be secured with Fonda Neal, Ph.D. program Coordinator, at least 2 weeks before your proposal defense date.

At least two weeks before the dissertation proposal defense date, all committee members should be provided with a copy (electronic, paper or as preferred by the members) of the dissertation proposal.

Research Phase

The student will begin Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission process in collaboration with the dissertation committee chair. The dissertation committee chair will serve as Principal Investigator for the study. IRB approval must be secured prior to beginning any study related activities. All research data must be maintained as required by IRB.

The chair should be informed of progress not less often than 5 times a semester and discuss any issues that arise. Committee members should be informed of the same not less often than the once-a-semester committee meeting.

When data analysis is nearly complete, a committee meeting should be held or the student should meet with members individually to examine the data and its interpretation. Students should seek input from committee members but should not give committee members drafts of chapters that have not been approved by the chair, unless instructed to do so by the chair.

F. Dissertation Options

The student's dissertation chair must approve the dissertation option.

- i. Traditional Style Dissertation: Chapters 1-5
 - a. Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem
 - b. Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework & Review of Literature
 - c. Chapter 3: Methods
 - d. Chapter 4: Results
 - e. Chapter 5: Discussion Summary and Implications
- ii. Equivalent options- must contain all of the content normally included in the traditional dissertation.
 - a. One or more manuscripts (submission ready) may replace any of the chapters.^b
 - b. A grant application may replace Chapters 1-3 (the application should be equivalent to the contents required in Chapters 1-3).

Due at Dissertation Proposal Defense: Chapters 1-3 or equivalent

Due at Dissertation Defense:

1. For the Traditional dissertation: Chapters 1-5
2. For the Alternative Options:
 - a. The final Dissertation must include an abstract and introduction.
 - b. If manuscripts are substituted for chapters, there must be a concluding narrative to tie the manuscripts together.
 - c. If the grant application replaces chapters 1-3, followed by chapters 4 and 5, the final product must include a description of the methods actually used in the research.

What is uploaded to Scholars Compass: See the student organization in Blackboard for dissertation sections that are required to be uploaded to Scholar's Compass. For those who chose one of the manuscript options, consult with dissertation chair to ensure you are compliant with copyright guidelines.

^aPlease refer to VCU Graduate School's Thesis/ Dissertation Manual for further guidance on requirements: <http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/student/thesis.html>.

^bAdditional requirements for manuscripts

- Journal titles for submission of the manuscripts. Student must submit journal names and author guidelines to dissertation committee for approval.
- Student must be first author on each manuscript involving others.
- Copies of the reprints are acceptable and will be submitted if the article has already been published. Legally acceptable releases from the copyright owner(s) are submitted where applicable.

G. Final Dissertation Defense

Ph.D. candidates are encouraged to use the Final Dissertation Defense Checklist (**Appendix F**) as a tool to ensure they are completing all required forms by their deadline.

The dissertation defense is a public event open to the School of Nursing community, and the Ph.D. candidate's invited guests. The defense has four components:

- a. a brief presentation of the research and findings by the candidate
- b. a series of questions posed to the candidate by dissertation committee members (the dissertation chair normally provides an opportunity for guests to ask questions, in addition)
- c. The dissertation committee evaluates the dissertation defense and determines if the candidate has satisfactorily met all dissertation requirements (the candidates and guests are not present for this portion of the defense). The committee will determine that both the dissertation product (potentially with revisions) and the oral defense of the dissertation are satisfactory (pass/fail).
- d. The candidate is then invited back into the room to receive the results (if there are revisions required in the dissertation draft, the student is informed of them at this time).

The following steps are necessary to initiate and finalize the defense process:

The dissertation must be prepared within the format of the School of Graduate Studies [Thesis and Dissertation Manual](#). This web site also has information about Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) submission. Ph.D. candidates should refer to this manual. If a student and the committee elect the publication style option, they should refer to the School of Nursing dissertation policy. Under no circumstances may the candidate go to the final defense with less than a completed copy of the dissertation.

It is wise to defend no later than two weeks prior to the "final date for sign-off on completion of the graduate dissertation for semester's completion of degree" date, which is published on the VCU Academic Calendar for each semester. After that date, the student must register for the following semester and update the application to graduate. The Dean of the School of Graduate Studies must sign the candidate's [ETD approval form/Approval form for thesis/dissertation and final oral examination](#) by this date if the candidate wishes to graduate during that semester. The date is usually the same as the last day of classes, before final exams. If revisions are needed, based on the committee's recommendation at the time of the defense, they must be completed by the time of graduation.

A defense date must be established that is compatible with the schedules of committee members. The Ph.D. candidate may not schedule the final defense unless all committee members can attend.

Once the final defense date has been established, the candidate must reserve a room with Fonda Neal, Ph.D. Program Coordinator, at least **4 weeks** before the final defense date.

At least **2 weeks** before the final dissertation defense date, the candidate must provide all committee members with a copy (electronic or paper) of the final dissertation defense materials.

The candidate must complete the VCU Graduate School [ETD approval form/Approval form for thesis/dissertation and final oral examination](#) and take it to the dissertation defense to obtain required signatures. Once the approval form has been completed and signed by the committee, it should be returned to Fonda Neal, Ph.D. Program Coordinator, for review and approval of the School Dean. The form will be forwarded to the Graduate School on the student's behalf.

The candidate must ensure that the [online application to graduate](#) has been completed by the university's deadline.

The candidate must contact the Academic Program Evaluation & Analytics Specialist, Monica Lozano (804-828-8236 or mmlozano@vcu.edu) to schedule an exit interview.

Graduation and Commencement

At the start of the student's final semester of the program, the student will receive details via email on how to initiate the graduation check out process along with specifics for the ceremonies. The University and the School of Nursing hold ceremonies in May and December. There is no August ceremony, but August graduates are invited to participate in December's ceremonies. School of Nursing Recognition Ceremonies typically takes place on the Friday evening before the university's graduation ceremony. Students are also encouraged to attend the university-wide ceremony on the following Saturday morning, where the nursing graduates will be recognized as a whole.

More information regarding graduation and commencement can be found on the university's website: <http://www.commencement.vcu.edu/Graduation-Info/>

Student Awards

Martha M. Borlick Research Award

Initiated in 1980, the Dr. Martha M. Borlick Research Award is presented at the School of Nursing Recognition Ceremony to Ph.D. student(s) in nursing who demonstrate(s) excellence in nursing research as evidenced in the research culminating products.

Student Travel

The VCU School of Nursing (SON) may provide travel assistance to current doctoral students to attend a national or regional research meeting or conference, depending upon the availability of funds. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs determines any restrictions on who receives the support. Priority is given to students who are presenting a paper or poster. The SON may pay up to \$500 towards conference/meeting expenses which includes registration fees and transportation to/from the conference or meeting. Limitations on the amount of support are set by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and are based on available funds and the number of students who are requesting funds.

Procedure:

Before the conference, meeting or travel destination, students who wish to apply for travel funds should:

1. Notify their faculty advisor and indicate how the conference or meeting fits their educational or career plans.
2. Obtain support/approval of the faculty advisor.
3. Complete the SON Travel Request form and attach a copy of the email from their advisor approving the travel. (The Budget Code/Index field should be left blank.)
4. Email the completed materials to the DNP/Ph.D. Program Coordinator indicating “Ph.D. Student or “DNP Student in the subject field. The student must complete the Travel Information section of the form according to their preferred method of travel and provide a copy of their air or rail travel itinerary.
5. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA) will then review and make a final decision on the request and the amount.
6. Upon ADAA approval, the Ph.D./DNP Program Coordinator will submit a SON Travel Request Web Help Desk Ticket for processing by the SON travel administrator.

Upon return from the conference, meeting or travel destination, students must:

7. Submit receipts to the Ph.D./DNP Program Coordinator for expenses that are being reimbursed, with the exceptions of meals. The travel administrator will then process the on-line Expense Report to complete the reimbursement process.

VCU Honor System

Virginia Commonwealth University is committed to the intellectual and academic success of a diverse student body; research and discovery that advances knowledge, inspires creativity, and improves human health; and the global engagement of students, faculty, and staff that transforms

lives and communities. In pursuit of these goals, the university's core values are accountability, achievement, collaboration, freedom, innovation, service, diversity, and integrity.

VCU recognizes that honesty, truth, and integrity are values central to its mission to advance knowledge and student success both in the world VCU students will enter, or return to, once they have graduated and in the university community as a microcosm of that world. In a community devoted to learning, a foundation of honor must exist if that community is to thrive with respect and harmony. Therefore, all members of the university community must conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty, ethics, and integrity at all times. Additional standards of academic and professional integrity consistent with this Honor System may apply to students in professional programs.

Because academic dishonesty is a violation of the profound trust of the entire academic community, the Honor System intends to:

- Foster an environment at VCU where academic dishonesty is not tolerated;
- Prevent any student from gaining, or attempting to gain, an unfair advantage over other students through academic misconduct;
- Define what constitutes academic misconduct and what conduct is expected of all members of the university community;
- Cultivate a centralized system of education and awareness of the Honor System; and
- Instill in members of the university community their responsibility for upholding academic integrity by recognizing that:
 - There is NO neutral stance when dishonesty occurs;
 - Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of academic dishonesty is not a neutral act;
 - Failure to take action detracts from a community of trust; and
 - Knowingly allowing others to represent the work of others as their own is as serious an offense as submitting another's work as your own.

It is important to report EVERY suspected incident of academic misconduct to ensure consistency across courses and departments, due process rights, appropriate response to repeated academic misconduct, and protection from unfounded allegations of misconduct.

More information can be found on the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at <https://students.vcu.edu/studentconduct/vcu-honor-system/>.

Use of Social Media

Patient confidentiality is fundamental to professional nursing practice.

Please remember the following:

- Patient information learned by the nursing student during the course of treatment must be safeguarded by the nursing student.
- You may not take, send, or receive oral recordings, pictures, or videos of patients, family members, or colleagues in the clinical setting.
- You cannot discuss (orally or in writing) your patients, family members, health care providers, healthcare personnel, or your clinical experiences on any social media site.
- You must promptly report any breach of confidentiality or privacy to your course or clinical faculty.

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) has published an excellent white paper on the Nurse's Guide to Social Media available on their website: <https://www.ncsbn.org/3739.htm>

School of Nursing Organizations

A. Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society of Nursing

The Gamma Omega Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing was established at Virginia Commonwealth University in 1978.

Chapter membership is open to current nursing students as well as nurse clinicians and nurse researchers. Review the membership guidelines and view networking opportunities at their webpage: <http://nursing.vcu.edu/about-us/sigma-theta-tau/>

B. Student Leadership Council

The Student Leadership Council seeks to establish a strong sense of community within the School of Nursing through student, faculty, and staff interactions.

The members of the Student Leadership Council provide advice and the student perspective to School of Nursing leadership on a variety of topics and they serve as ambassadors of the School of Nursing among their peers and in their communities

Student membership consists of class directors from each program and leaders of School of Nursing student organizations.

The council meets three times per semester during the regular academic year.

Non-Academic Policies and Information

A. Inclement Weather and Disaster Response

The School of Nursing follows the University Office Closings Policy and other policies that relate to disasters and emergencies will be followed.

Information Related to Inclement Weather and Disaster Response

The VCU Office Closings Policy and other policies and procedures relating to disasters and emergencies are located on the University web site.

The telephone number for the VCU Inclement Weather and Information Hotline is (804) 828-6736. Any university emergencies or notifications of inclement weather will be announced on the main university website, <http://alert.vcu.edu> and the local news. In the event that there are detailed announcements to augment the information provided by the University, they will be disseminated to School of Nursing employees and students via e-mail.

B. Emergency Preparedness Procedures

For the university: Current operating conditions for the university are posted at the VCU Alert Website <http://alert.vcu.edu>. The website provides resources for emergency contacts and what to do in the event of an emergency. This website is where students, faculty and staff can sign up for text alerts. VCU's text message alert system is used to provide immediate information about campus emergencies, weather delays and cancellations. **When the university is closed, practica are cancelled.

Specific to the School of Nursing: In the event that there is an emergency that is specific to the School of Nursing, an email will go out to faculty, staff and students, information will be posted on the School of Nursing main webpage, and information will be posted on the SON Blackboard portal for School of Nursing students, faculty and staff. Faculty, staff and students can contact the SON emergency phone number at 804-828-1307. This message will be updated in the event that there is a situation that closes the School of Nursing building when the university remains open.

Fire: Follow the VCU “RACE” procedure.

- Remove anyone in danger.
- Activate the alarm.
- Close the doors to contain the smoke as the building is being evacuated.
- Extinguish the fire, if trained.

Earthquake

- Do not set off the fire alarm.
- Do not exit the building.
- Do shelter in place.

Tornado

- Move to the lowest level and interior space or along a corridor wall away from windows and glass in shelter.
- Close all doors, including main corridors.
- If outside, quickly move to nearest sturdy building.

Hazardous Materials

- Call 804-828-1234
- Evacuate and designate someone to talk with the Fire Department.
- Notify emergency personnel if exposed, or have details on the spill.

Assembly Areas: There are two designated assembly areas for the School of Nursing. One area is the loading zone located directly adjacent to the building. The second area is the sidewalk near the Martin Luther King Bridge.

Floor Wardens: The School of Nursing Floor Wardens are responsible for coordinating the evacuation of the floors during a fire or other evacuation emergency. Additionally, floor wardens are responsible for assisting any evacuees located in the “Areas of Rescue Assistance” or notifying emergency responders of their location.

C. Food and Beverages Policy

Food and beverages (with the exception of bottled water) can be consumed only in designated areas of the building. It is the responsibility of all members of the School of Nursing community to assist with enforcement of this policy. Designated areas in which food and beverages are allowed are the 1st floor student lounge, quiet study area and doctoral student area, third floor faculty/administrative professional lounge, Dean’s conference room, conference rooms 3038, 3001f and 4001c and private offices. Permission for use of classrooms 1013 and 2001d for functions that include consumption of food and beverages may be requested. Requests for permission for these special functions must be made to the Office of the Dean and scheduled through the room scheduling office of the School of Nursing. Scheduled classes will have priority for use of these specially designated classrooms.

When a room is used for a function that involves food and beverages, it carries with it the responsibility of the users to clean the room entirely of any food or containers and dispose of in appropriate receptacles. If it is necessary for the School of Nursing to contract professional cleaning for any debris, spills or stains that resulted from the special event, costs will be charged to the sponsor of the event.

D. Building Access

The School of Nursing building is open Monday – Friday from 7:00 am – 5:00 pm. Students must use their ID badge to access the building after hours, including weekends.

E. Student Identification Cards/Badges

All faculty and staff at the university and medical center are required to carry an identification card. ID cards are required to access the School of Nursing after business hours and are needed to obtain a discount (10%) at the campus bookstores, hospital cafeteria and various other dining locations on campus (see Places to Eat). The first ID card is provided at no charge. Replacement cards (lost or stolen) are provided for a fee which is due at the time the new card is obtained. For more information, consult the Card Office website (<http://vcucard.vcu.edu/>).

F. Student Lounge

The Student Lounge on the first floor is open to all students. If food and/or drinks are being consumed, students are responsible for cleaning up after themselves as necessary. The kitchen that is located off of the student lounge is equipped with microwaves and a refrigerator. The refrigerator is purged every Friday afternoon and all remaining items are discarded.

G. Quiet Study Room

The Quiet Study Room is open during building operating hours and can be accessed through the Student Lounge. No food or drink are allowed in the Quiet Study Room.

H. Photocopying

There is a photocopier for student use available at the top of the stairs on the second floor.

I. Technology

There are both Windows and Apple computers available for student use on the first floor in the quiet study lounge, located adjacent to the student lounge.

There are two pay for print stations located near the vending machines on the first floor and at the top of the stairs on the second floor. Students can go to: <http://go.vcu.edu/p4p> to download the drivers on their personal laptops so that they can print to the pay for print stations from their laptops. Sending a job to pay for print allows access to the print job from any pay for print printer on campus.

Pay for print requires RamBucks which can be used for goods and services at VCU. To find out how to obtain and use RamBucks, please go to: <http://vcucard.vcu.edu/myrambucks.html>

J. Parking

Visit the VCU parking website at <http://www.parking.vcu.edu>

K. Name and Address Changes

Students must ensure that their name and addresses (local, mailing, permanent and remit to) are up-to-date in eServices at all times. For name changes, students must submit to the Office of Records &

Registration a copy of their new Social Security card (or applicable documentation) and an updated Personal Update Form. Additional procedural information can be found in the student's eServices account, under the "Personal Information" tab.

L. Recycling and Trash Receptacles

The VCU campus is an environment of sustainability. As such, there are specially-marked containers in the School of Nursing building and around campus for specific salvageable materials. There are separate trash containers for "organic items" such as food and liquid and for all other items such paper, plastic, metal, and glass.

M. Library Services

The VCU Library has many resources to assist you in meeting your academic goals. The library has a School of Nursing liaison who can assist students with educational and research needs. The following is the link to the VCU Library: www.library.vcu.edu.

Nationally, Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences is a top-tier health sciences library. It holds one of the largest and most extensive collections of health sciences literature in North America. The library primarily serves the MCV Campus, which houses one of the oldest medical schools in the South, founded in 1838. The library, in one form or location or another, has been a part of the medical campus since 1897. Located on 12th Street—two blocks north of the Gateway Building at the VCU Medical Center and within easy walks to the schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing and Allied Health Professions—the library is physically central to today's health sciences campus. It provides access to affiliated students, faculty, clinicians and practicing health care professionals on and off campus.

N. Division for Academic Success (DAS)

The Division for Academic Success provides academic support for students who need assistance with test-taking skills, study strategies and preparation for board/licensing exams. DAS also provide disability support services to students on the MCV Campus who have a documented disability. The following is a link to the DAS website: <http://das.vcu.edu>

O. VCU Writing Center

The Writing Center is a peer-based learning support service for currently-enrolled VCU students. Their primary focus is to help students become the strongest writers possible. The Writing Center does not edit or proofread papers, but rather discusses big picture issues such as structure, organization, and how to best articulate ideas. For more information, the Writing Center's website is: <http://writing.vcu.edu/>.

Appendix A- Student Verification Form



VCU

Ph.D. Student Verification Form

Name (please print) _____

I certify that I have carefully read and I am responsible for all of the following:

- I acknowledge that email is the official mode of communication for the university and school and that I am responsible for using my VCU.edu email address for university/school related communication.
- I acknowledge that I am responsible for knowing the requirements and the policies of the University and School of Nursing as published in the policies on the school's web page, the University Bulletin, and my program specific SON Student Handbook
 - o Background/Drug Screening Policy and related items-
 - All students must also report any felony or misdemeanor charges and convictions, which occur during their enrollment within 10 business days of occurrence to the Assistant Dean of Enrollment and Student Services.
 - Students are also required to complete Background/Drug Screening process upon re-entry subsequent to a leave of absence, program withdrawal or program separation greater than thirty consecutive days.
- I acknowledge that professional nursing ethics prohibits posting photographs or any information about a patient or staff through any electronic or non-electronic means including, but not limited to social networking sites, blogs, and tweeting. Violation may result in disciplinary and/or legal action.
- I acknowledge that I must register for all nursing course by the required date. I am responsible for reviewing the VCU academic calendar and course schedule.
- I acknowledge that Ph.D. students in Dissertation phase are to schedule a committee meeting not less than once a semester with committee members.
- I am responsible for working with my advisor to ensure I am following my plan of study. If a change is needed regarding my plan of study, I am required to review changes and obtain permission for those changes with my advisor.
- I acknowledge and understand that should I become out of step with my plan of study due to voluntary or medical withdrawal, leave of absence, suspension, or failure that I will be permitted to return to my program of study pending space availability.
- I certify that my license to practice as a Registered Nurse is current and unrestricted and that failure to renew my RN license will result in removal from the program.
- I acknowledge that if I want to do any required field placement in a state other than Virginia, I will consult with appropriate faculty and administration about the implications of doing so with respect to the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (NC-SARA), a national reciprocity agreement among states.
- I acknowledge that a Ph.D. student who has completed coursework requirements for a degree must register for a minimum of one credit at VCU each semester until the degree is awarded.
- I acknowledge that I must send my **Certificate of Immunization for VCU Health Science Students** to the School of Nursing prior to the first day of class. I acknowledge that University Student Health Services will review my record and will place a hold on my account if I am not in compliance with university requirement.
- I am responsible for completing the School of Nursing's End of Program survey and an Exit Interview following completion of the final dissertation defense, as well as completing the Ph.D. Alumni Survey at 1 and 3 years post-graduation.

My signature indicates that I am in compliance with all of the conditions stated above.

Signature _____

Date _____

An equal opportunity/affirmative action university

Appendix B- Plans of Study

Biobehavioral – Full Time

Virginia Commonwealth University - School of Nursing PhD Program Full Time Plan of Study Biobehavioral

Course #	Course Title	Credits	Term OFFERED (Year)	Term Planned	Term Completed	Prerequisite
NURS 703	Philosophy of Human Science	3	Fall 1			
NURS 772	Qualitative Research	3	Fall 1			
NURS 701	Statistical Methods for Nursing Research	3	Fall 1			
		9				
NURS 704	Analysis and Construction of Theory for Nursing Research	3	Spring 1			NURS 703
NURS 702	Advanced Statistical Concepts for Nursing Research	3	Spring 1			NURS 701
NURS 770	Quantitative Research	3	Spring 1			NURS 701 or perm.; coreq. NURS 702
		9				
NURS 700	Scientific Integrity: Responsible Conduct of Research	1	Must be taken in Summer 1			
NURS 796	Directed Research Experience	2				
		3				
NURS 720	Foundations of Biobehavioral Research	3	Fall 2			NURS 704
	Focus of Inquiry 2 (Cognate or Advanced Methods)	3	Fall 2			
	Focus of Inquiry 2 (Cognate or Advanced Methods)	3				
NURS 776	Research Program Development Seminar I	2				
		11				
NURS 773	Perspectives on Research Design	3	Spring 2			NURS 703 and NURS 704
NURS 721	Advanced Concepts in Biobehavioral Research	3	Spring 2			NURS 720 or Permission
NURS 797	Practicum in Nursing Research	3	May be taken at any time			
NURS 777	Research Program Development Seminar II	2	Spring 2			
		11				
NURS 725	Synthesis and Emerging Trends in Scientific Inquiry	3	Summer 2			NURS 720 & NURS 721
NURS 778	Research Program Development Seminar III	2				
		5				
NURS 796	Directed Research Experience (comprehensive exam)	1				
NURS 898	Dissertation	Minimum of 12				Admission to Candidacy
	TOTAL	Minimum of 61				

Biobehavioral – Part Time

Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Nursing PhD Program Part Time Plan of Study—Biobehavioral

Course #	Course Title	Credits	Term	Term Completed	Prerequisites
NURS 703	Philosophy of Human Science	3	Fall		
NURS 701	Statistical Methods for Nursing Research	3	Fall		
		6			
NURS 704	Analysis and Construction of Theory for Nursing Research	3	Spring		NURS 703
NURS 702	Advanced Statistical Concepts for Nursing Research	3	Spring		NURS 701
		6			
NURS 700	Scientific Integrity: Responsible Conduct of Research	1	Must be taken in Summer 1		
NURS 796* or NURS 792	Directed Research Experience or Directed Research Inquiry	2	May be taken at any time		
	*A minimum of 2 credits of NURS 796 is required by the completion of coursework.	3			
NURS 772	Qualitative Research	3	Fall		
	Focus of Inquiry 1 (Cognate or NURS 792)	3	May be taken at any time		
		6			
NURS 770	Quantitative Research	3	Spring		NURS 701 or permission; coreq. NURS 702
	Focus of Inquiry 2 (Cognate or Advanced Methods)	3	Spring		
		6			
NURS 720	Foundations of Biobehavioral Research	3	Fall		NURS 704
NURS 776	Research Program Development Seminar I	2	Fall		
NURS 797	Practicum in Nursing Research	3	May be taken at any time		
		8			
NURS 721	Advanced Concepts in Biobehavioral Research	3	Spring		NURS 720 or Permission
NURS 777	Research Program Development Seminar II	2	Spring		
NURS 773	Perspectives on Research Design	3	Spring		NURS 703 and NURS 704
		8			

NURS 725	Synthesis and Emerging Trends in Scientific Inquiry	3	Summer		NURS 720 & NURS 721
NURS 778	Research Program Development Seminar III	2	Summer		
		5			
NURS 796	Directed Research Experience (Comprehensive Exam)	1			
NURS 898	Dissertation	Minimum of 12			Admission to Candidacy
	TOTAL	Minimum of 61			

Quality and Safety– Full Time

Virginia Commonwealth University - School of Nursing PhD Program Full Time Plan of Study – Quality and Safety

Course #	Course Title	Credits	Term OFFERED (Year)	Term Planned	Term Completed	Prerequisites
NURS 703	Philosophy of Human Science	3	Fall 1			
NURS 701	Statistical Methods for Nursing Research	3	Fall 1			
NURS 772	Qualitative Research	3	Fall 1			
		9				
NURS 704	Analysis and Construction of Theory for Nursing Research	3	Spring 1			NURS 703
NURS 702	Advanced Statistical Concepts for Nursing Research	3	Spring 1			NURS 701
NURS 770	Quantitative Research	3	Spring 1			NURS 701 or perm.; coreq. NURS 702
		9				
NURS 700	Scientific Integrity: Responsible Conduct of Research	1	Must be taken Summer 1			
NURS 796* or NURS 792	Directed Research Experience or Directed Research Inquiry	2	Summer 1			
	*A minimum of 2 credits of NURS 796 is required by the completion of coursework	3				
NURS 731	Foundations in Healthcare Quality Research	3	Fall 2			NURS 704 or perm.
NURS 610	Health Information & Data Management	3	Fall 2			
NURS 638	Health Policy Leadership & Advocacy	3	Fall 2			NURS 606
NURS 776	Research Program Development Seminar I	2				
		11				
NURS 732	Advanced Concepts in Healthcare Quality Research	3	Spring 2			NURS 731 or perm.
NURS 777	Research Program Development Seminar II	2	Spring			
NURS 773	Perspectives on Research Design	3	Spring			NURS 703 & NURS 704
NURS 797	Practicum in Nursing Research	3	May be taken at any time			NURS 700 or perm.
		11				
NURS 725	Synthesis and Emerging Trends in Scientific Inquiry	3	Summer 2			NURS 731 & NURS 732
NURS 778	Research Program Development Seminar III	2				
		5				
NURS 796	Directed Research Experience (Comprehensive Exam)	1				

NURS 898	Dissertation	Minimum of 12			Admission to Candidacy
		TOTAL	Minimum of 61		

Quality and Safety – Part Time

Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Nursing PhD Program Part Time Plan of Study—Quality and Safety

Course #	Course Title	Credits	Term	Term Completed	Prerequisites
NURS 703	Philosophy of Human Science	3	Fall		
NURS 610	Health Information and Data Management	3	Fall		
		6			
NURS 704	Analysis and Construction of Theory for Nursing Research	3	Spring		NURS 703
NURS 796* or NURS 792	Directed Research Experience or Directed Research Inquiry	2	May be taken at any time		
	*A minimum of 2 credits of NURS 796 is required by the completion of coursework	5			
NURS 700	Scientific Integrity: Responsible Conduct of Research	1	Must be taken in Summer 1		
NURS 701	Statistical Methods for Nursing Research	3	Fall		
NURS 772	Qualitative Research	3	Fall		
		6			
NURS 702	Advanced Statistical Concepts for Nursing Research	3	Spring		NURS 701
NURS 770	Quantitative Research	3	Spring		NURS 701 or perm.; coreq. NURS 702
		6			
NURS 797	Practicum in Nursing Research	3	May be taken at any time		NURS 700 or permission
NURS 731	Foundations in Healthcare Quality Research	3	Fall		NURS 704 or perm.
NURS 776	Research Program Development Seminar I	2	Fall		
NURS 638	Health Policy Leadership & Advocacy	3	Fall		NURS 606
		8			
NURS 732	Advanced Concepts in Healthcare Quality Research	3	Spring		NURS 731 or Permission
NURS 777	Research Program Development Seminar II	2	Spring		
NURS 773	Perspectives on Research Design	3	Spring		NURS 703 & NURS 704
		8			
NURS 725	Synthesis and Emerging Trends in Scientific Inquiry	3	Summer		NURS 731 & NURS 732
NURS 778	Research Program Development Seminar III	2	Summer		

		5			
NURS 796	Directed Research Experience (Comprehensive Exam)	1			
NURS 898	Dissertation	Minimum of 12			Admission to Candidacy
	TOTAL	Minimum of 61			

Appendix C- Benchmark Guidance Document for Ph.D. Students

Outlined below are *recommendations* for progress through the Ph.D. program and for being successful as a future nurse scientist, based on a full-time program of study.

Year One (fall—spring—summer)	
	Identify research focus
	Discuss with advisor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program of study, including electives • explore research funding opportunities, if research plan is well-defined • ideas of who could serve as committee chair and members
	Refine and narrow research question
	Attend a relevant research conference/ professional meeting
Year Two (fall—spring—summer)	
	Work with advisor to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finalize plans for completion of coursework • refine ideas about who will serve as committee chair & potential members (and make initial contact) • further explore and/or submit research funding opportunities
	Finalize research question
	Begin development of Dissertation Proposal
	Submit a poster for presentation at a research conference/ professional meeting
	Prepare a manuscript for publication
	Prepare for and confirm dates for Comprehensive Exam (written and oral):
	Complete application for doctoral candidacy
Years Three and Four (fall—spring—summer)	
	Complete paperwork identifying Dissertation committee chair and members
	Start formal work with committee chair & members on Dissertation Proposal.
	If not done previously, submit grant for dissertation support
	Write Dissertation Proposal Refer to dissertation policy
	Schedule Dissertation Proposal Defense
	Successfully defend Dissertation Proposal to the dissertation committee
	Prior to conducting dissertation research, submit IRB application and obtain IRB approval to conduct dissertation research
	Start and complete Dissertation research study
	Work closely with the committee chair and members regarding dissertation: data analysis, chapter or manuscript development, recruitment, data collection, etc.
	Complete Dissertation
	Schedule Final Dissertation Defense
	Defend Dissertation in a public venue
	Complete graduate school requirements to receive Ph.D. degree (uploading dissertation to the Scholars Compass, ProQuest and completing Survey of Earned Doctorates)
	Attend VCU School of Nursing Recognition Ceremony and VCU Commencement

Appendix D- On-Campus Agreement



Dear Ph.D. Nursing Students:

Re: Mandatory Ph.D. On-Campus Sessions

It is the VCU School of Nursing's (SON) policy as stated on the SON's website that all Ph.D. students in coursework are required to attend the on-campus experience which occurs at the beginning of each semester. These dates are posted on the SON's website at least one year in advance to allow you to plan your schedule accordingly. This experience is a critical part of your Ph.D. program and extremely valuable for your success in the program. In addition, you will attend the first day of courses and seminars on various research topics. These sessions are a great opportunity for you to meet faculty, staff, and other Ph.D. students in the program.

The initial on-campus session allows you to obtain your VCU ID card, receive an orientation to library resources at VCU, and take a tour of the VCU School of Nursing building. Staff members from the Information Technology department are onsite at each session to provide technical support and to answer questions about online learning, such as managing blackboard.

Please sign and date below to acknowledge that you understand that your attendance is a required expectation of the program. Please bring this letter with you to the first day of the on-campus experience. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ms. Fonda Neal, Ph.D. Ph.D. Program Coordinator, at fneal@vcu.edu or (804) 828-0836.

Sincerely,

Jo Lynne W. Robins, Ph.D., RN, ANP-BC, CHTP, AHN-C
Associate Professor
Department of Family and Community Health Nursing
Director, Ph.D. Program

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Appendix E- Guidelines for Dissertation & Committee Membership

Dissertation Committee

Guidelines for Dissertation Chair & Committee Members

1. In collaboration with the student, the dissertation committee is formed. It must consist of at least 4 members, one of which must be external to the Son. All members must be designated as graduate faculty. This includes VCU faculty and faculty from other universities that may be invited to participate as committee members. Graduate faculty status is confirmed or obtained by the Office of Academic Programs.
2. The Chair negotiates specific roles for committee members, i.e. content expert, clinical expert, methodologist, statistician, etc.
3. Discuss the specific format the student has selected for the dissertation. Engagement in the process by *all* committee members is critical.
4. The Chair clarifies expectations of the student and committee members at the first committee meeting.
5. The Chair and committee members review drafts of the student's work and provide written feedback within the designated/requested timeframes.
6. The Chair, committee members, and student participates in required meetings, proposal defense and dissertation defense. The chair and committee members meet with the student at least once per semester. This meeting can be via telephone or video conference. The student will distribute an agenda prior to each meeting.
7. The Chair reminds committee members of upcoming requirements (deadlines, etc.) during meetings and by emails.
8. The Chair and committee members guide and mentor the student to improve the student's work and to build interdisciplinary teams including the potential for ongoing collaborations in future work.
9. The Dissertation Committee Chair is the PI of the study (for IRB purposes).
10. Upon successful completion of the defense, the student must format and upload the document into Scholar's Compass and ProQuest.
11. The Chair monitors IRB status and study closure in collaboration with the student.

Appendix F- Final Dissertation Defense Checklist

In preparation for your final dissertation defense, please follow these guidelines and assure that all forms are correctly completed.

- Successfully defended dissertation proposal
- Review transcript for any missing grades or grades of “I”. Incomplete grades need to be converted to the appropriate letter grade. If not converted, grades of “I” convert to an “F” after graduation.
- Make sure the application to graduate has been submitted.
- Provide committee members with an electronic copy of the final dissertation at least two weeks before the final dissertation defense date.
- Secure a room for the final dissertation defense date with Fonda Neal **at least 4 weeks in advance** of the final dissertation defense date. The link to request a room is located in the SON DNP and Ph.D. Student organization in Blackboard, Dissertation Process folder.
- Notify Fonda Neal by email (fneal@vcu.edu) with the dissertation title.
- Download and complete the VCU Graduate School **ETD approval form/Approval form for thesis/dissertation and final oral examination** (<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/community/thesis.html>) and take to the dissertation defense. Please make sure that names of the Graduate Advisor Committee are typed on the form, leaving room for signatures. Do not type the names of the Graduate Program Director or Dean as these lines are for their signatures only. Return the form to Fonda Neal in the Office of Academic Programs (Room 4009c) who will obtain signatures from the Program Director and ADAA submit the form to the Graduate School.
- Read the **VCU Graduate School Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Manual** on the graduate school’s website (<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/student/thesis.html>) and adhere to the requirements regarding submission of thesis/dissertation to **Scholars Compass** and to **ProQuest** and completing the **Survey of Earned Doctorates**. Be sure to print the Certificate of Completion as it may be necessary to provide a copy to the graduate school at a later date.
- Inform Fonda when the dissertation has been uploaded to the Compass and to ProQuest and that the Survey has been completed, so that she can submit the final graduation application to the Graduation Office.
- Schedule an exit interview with Monica Lazano, Academic Program Evaluation and Analytics Specialist, Office of Academic Programs. This is conducted in person or by phone. She can be reached at mmlozano@vcu.edu or 828-8236.
- Complete the online End of Program survey (request sent from Monica Lazano).

Appendix G- Ph.D. Student Advisor Change Form

**SCHOOL OF NURSING
Doctoral Student Advisor Change Form**

This form must be completed and submitted to Fonda Neal before the change will take effect.

Student Name (sign) **Date**

Current Advisor(s):

(Print name) (sign) Date

Current Advisor

(Print name) (sign) Date

Current Co-Advisor (if applicable)

Change in Advisor(s):

(Print name) (sign) Date

New Advisor

(Print name) (sign) Date

New Co-Advisor (if applicable)

(Print name) (sign) Date

Doctoral Program Director

The current advisor's and co-advisor's (if applicable) signature above is acknowledgement that he/she will no longer mentor this student if there is a change in one or both advisors.

Appendix H- Leave of Absence Form

LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM

(Please complete and submit to the Office of Academic Programs)

Name: _____

Date: _____

In addition to completing this form, you need to ensure that you are withdrawn from any current course work. You can withdraw or drop classes using eServices.

Dates of requested LOA: From beginning of _____ semester/year through the end of _____ semester/year.

*Student will return to the program at the start of the _____ semester of _____ (year).

Reason for requested leave of absence:

Advisor's comments on the leave of absence:

***Students are expected to notify their advisor and the program coordinator of their intention to return to the program at least 60 days prior to the start of the semester in which the student is returning. Otherwise, the student will be withdrawn from the program.**

Student's Signature and Date

Advisor's Signature and Date

Program Director's Signature and Date

PLEASE NOTE, IF YOUR HOME ADDRESS CHANGES AT ANYTIME, PLEASE UPDATE IT IN ESERVICES AND INFORM THE OFFICE OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS. IF YOU ARE RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID, PLEASE CONTACT FINANCIAL AID AND/OR STUDENT ACCOUNTING ABOUT THE STATUS OF YOUR AWARD OR LOAN.