

Kent State University and The University of Akron
PhD in Nursing Program
PhD Candidacy Examination Protocol

FINAL APPROVAL: 3/15/05 by PhD Doctoral Faculty Council;
Effective with JPDN Students Entering the Program During and After Fall 2005

1. PURPOSE: Students are eligible to take the candidacy exam when they complete all required course work (last cognate may be concurrent with the examination). The purpose of the candidacy examination is to determine a student's readiness for transition to the next phase of doctoral work, the dissertation. The candidacy exam provides the student with the opportunity to demonstrate breadth, depth, and synthesis of philosophy/theory, methods, statistics, and specialized content area. Candidacy is viewed as a diagnostic process to show that the student can link course work, developing an area of expertise, and the dissertation.

2. ACADEMIC ADVISORS/CANDIDACY EXAMINATION CHAIRS/DISSERTATION CHAIRS. Each student is assigned an academic advisor upon admission to the PhD program. The advisor begins working with the student by advising about academic coursework. The advisor may then become the chair of the candidacy examination committee as well as chair of the dissertation committee. If, at any time, the student wishes to change advisors/chairs, the student must first contact the appropriate PhD program director before proceeding.

3. CANDIDACY EXAMINATION PREPARATION: Students begin to prepare for candidacy with their academic advisors (who may become their candidacy chairs) early in their coursework. A report of this work is required during the course titled, "Introduction to Nursing Knowledge Domains." This work represents preparation of a preliminary substantive content document (outline or narrative) for **possible** future dissertation research. One possible content document is a draft of the first three chapters of a dissertation, but this is **not** required. The student and advisor/chair can best decide how to prepare for the candidacy exam.

4. SCHEDULING THE EXAMINATION AND DEADLINES: The candidacy examination is to be completed *within one year* (two semesters, excluding summer semester) following completion of coursework. Students and advisors who cannot meet this deadline should petition the PhD director with rationale for the delay and submit a plan and schedule for completing the candidacy examination in an efficient manner.

The scheduling of the examination should occur during the first two weeks of the semester in which the student wishes to take the examination. Scheduling is done with the appropriate PhD secretary. The examination can be taken at any time in that semester, subject to the approval of the candidacy chair and the PhD director.

5. THE CANDIDACY EXAMINATION COMMITTEE: The PhD program directors, in consultation with the student and advisor, appoint the candidacy committee from a list of PhD faculty. The candidacy committee is made up of the advisor/chair and members knowledgeable about coursework content areas and the student's research content areas.

The candidacy committee consists of three members, two from the student's university of record and one from the other university. Each member has an equal vote. Members of the candidacy committee could possibly become part of the dissertation committee in the future.

The academic advisor is the first choice to chair the candidacy committee and is responsible for the development of examination questions in consultation with the other committee members. The advisor/chair is also responsible for (a) supervising the scheduling and process of the examination with the student and PhD secretary, (b) coordinating the review and grading of the examination, and (c) providing oral feedback, as necessary, to the student two weeks, or sooner, following the written examination.

6. THE EXAMINATION ITSELF: The candidacy examination is a two-part process involving both written and oral portions.

The Written Examination: The first part of the examination involves a written, open book, two-day examination at a set location. The number of examination questions and choice of examination content are determined by the candidacy committee chair in consultation with the other two committee members. The examination includes items from philosophy/theory, methods, statistics, and specialized content area. The student may bring class notes and selected references. A computer and blank disk are provided for composition of the student's written answers.

Oral Examination: The second part of the examination involves a (two-hour) oral examination. The purpose of the oral examination is to expand upon areas of strength and elaborate on identified areas of concern from the written examination. The candidacy committee chair provides oral feedback to the student regarding areas of concern from the written examination. The student should be prepared to further clarify and elaborate on these areas of concern. The student may bring written notes to refer to at the oral examination.

The oral examination is a closed session made up of the candidacy committee.

This oral examination is scheduled at the time the written examination is scheduled so it occurs within four weeks (and preferably within two weeks) after the written examination.

The student becomes a candidate upon successful completion of the written and oral examinations judged by a majority of candidacy committee members.

7. REVIEW AND GRADING OF THE EXAMINATION: Each content area is pass/fail. In the event the student is not successful with one or more of the written examination items, the successful/passed items stand and are not re-evaluated. Weaker areas of concern from the written examination are evaluated during the oral examination. If, during the oral exam, the student does not correct the areas that were weak, the committee grades the exam as failure.

8. FAILURE OF THE EXAMINATION: In the event of candidacy examination failure, the student is given a written plan of action that might include remedial work (i.e. additional course work or repeat of specified courses). This written plan is placed in the student's academic file. The chair, in consultation with the committee members, develops and reviews the written plan with the student and a repeat examination is scheduled. After a total of two failed candidacy examinations, the student is dismissed from the program.