

Policy Number:	D7315
Faculty Approved:	11/1997
Effective Date:	11/1997
Reviewed Date:	10/2017
Revision Date:	9/2021
Dean Approved:	6/2022

Policy Title: PhD Program Candidacy Exam

Policy: The candidacy examination is a benchmark in the PhD educational process to determine the student's readiness for pursuing dissertation research. The examination permits a student to demonstrate a command of the theoretical and methodological issues related to a specific research area. The exam builds on coursework and precedes the dissertation proposal defense.

The candidacy examination consists of a “state of the science” paper in the selected research area (the written examination) and an oral examination. Together, the paper and oral examinations should evidence a command of extant knowledge, and theoretical and methodological issues in the area of research and include the following components:

- A comprehensive review of related literature
- A summary of theoretical/conceptual foundations
- A critique of methodologies and data analysis strategies
- A synthesis of the knowledge and identification of gaps
- A clear direction for future research in the field

The paper is written using the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) format. The paper should be of such quality to permit publication in the *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* or another peer reviewed and indexed journal of similar scholarly quality.

The oral examination is a thorough examination and discussion of the student’s knowledge in the selected research area at the doctoral level of scholarship. The oral examination is broader than the written examination to help determine if the student has mastered adequately the theoretical and methodological foundations to conduct the dissertation research.

The candidacy examination requires independent work. The student may not seek assistance from others such as editors or reviewers, in completion of the written examinations. The student may however use the expertise and assistance of an academic librarian for identification of the literature.

Two attempts to pass the candidacy exam in different semesters are allowed. In accordance with the grading policy of the PhD program, the student is dismissed from the PhD program if the second attempt is unsuccessful.

Timing in Program: The required candidacy examination is conducted with the approval of the academic advisor or dissertation chair after the student has completed the following courses: N7501, N7530, N7540, N7541, N7542, and N7543. A student may be advised to complete electives and/or cognates prior to taking the candidacy examination. The candidacy examination process takes approximately 13 weeks. Students register for the 3-credit Candidacy Examination (N7590) during the semester the examination is to be taken.

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Procedure: The candidacy examination has two parts, a written paper and an oral examination. The student must pass both the written and oral examination to be admitted to candidacy.

Prior to the semester in which the student plans to register for the candidacy examination, the student meets with the advisor to complete the Request for Candidacy Examination (C1) Form. This form lists the student's research area and the proposed membership (with consent) of the Candidacy Committee. Form C1 is accompanied by brief biographies of all recommended committee members and rationales for their selection. The academic advisor or dissertation chair is encouraged to be a member of this committee to ensure continuity in the educational process. The completed Form C1 is submitted to the Director of the PhD program, who will then forward it to the PhD Council after checking the form for compliance with this policy.

The PhD Council approves or reformulates membership for the Candidacy Committee.

Form C1 then is submitted to the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs. The Candidacy Committee is comprised of the Chair, who is not the student's advisor or dissertation chair, and two other School of Nursing faculty members who have been approved by the PhD Council to serve on PhD student committees.

The student, once the committee is approved, submits a portfolio of papers from all the PhD courses and independent studies to the Candidacy Committee for review prior to enrolling in candidacy. The student meets with the Candidacy Committee at the start or prior to start of the semester when the student will enroll for candidacy examination to clarify the topic of the candidacy examination and receive the dates for the completion of the written examinations and estimated date for the oral examination. The Chair of the Candidacy Committee completes Form C2 (Notification of Candidacy Examination Topic and Committee) after this meeting and distributes it to the student, the Candidacy Committee members, the PhD Program Director, and the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs.

Process for Candidacy Examination (See Flow Chart and Flow Diagram): The student has up to 6 weeks to complete the written examination paper and submit it to the Candidacy Committee. The members of the Candidacy Committee inform the Chair of the Candidacy Committee within 2 weeks of receiving the paper whether or not the student passes the written examination. If the student passes the written examination, the date of the oral examination is confirmed. If the student fails the written examination, the student receives a fail on the written exam portion of the Form C3, meets with the Chair of the Candidacy Committee to receive feedback on the paper and has 3 weeks to rewrite the paper. On behalf of the Candidacy Committee, the Chair informs the student within 1 week of the rewrite if the paper is a pass or fail. If the student passes the rewritten examination the student receives a pass on the rewritten exam portion of Form C3, and the student proceeds to the oral examination. If the student fails the rewritten

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examination, the student must retake the candidacy examination in another semester. The student may not proceed to the oral examination until the Candidacy

Committee determines that the written paper satisfactorily meets the criteria for a “state of the science” paper.

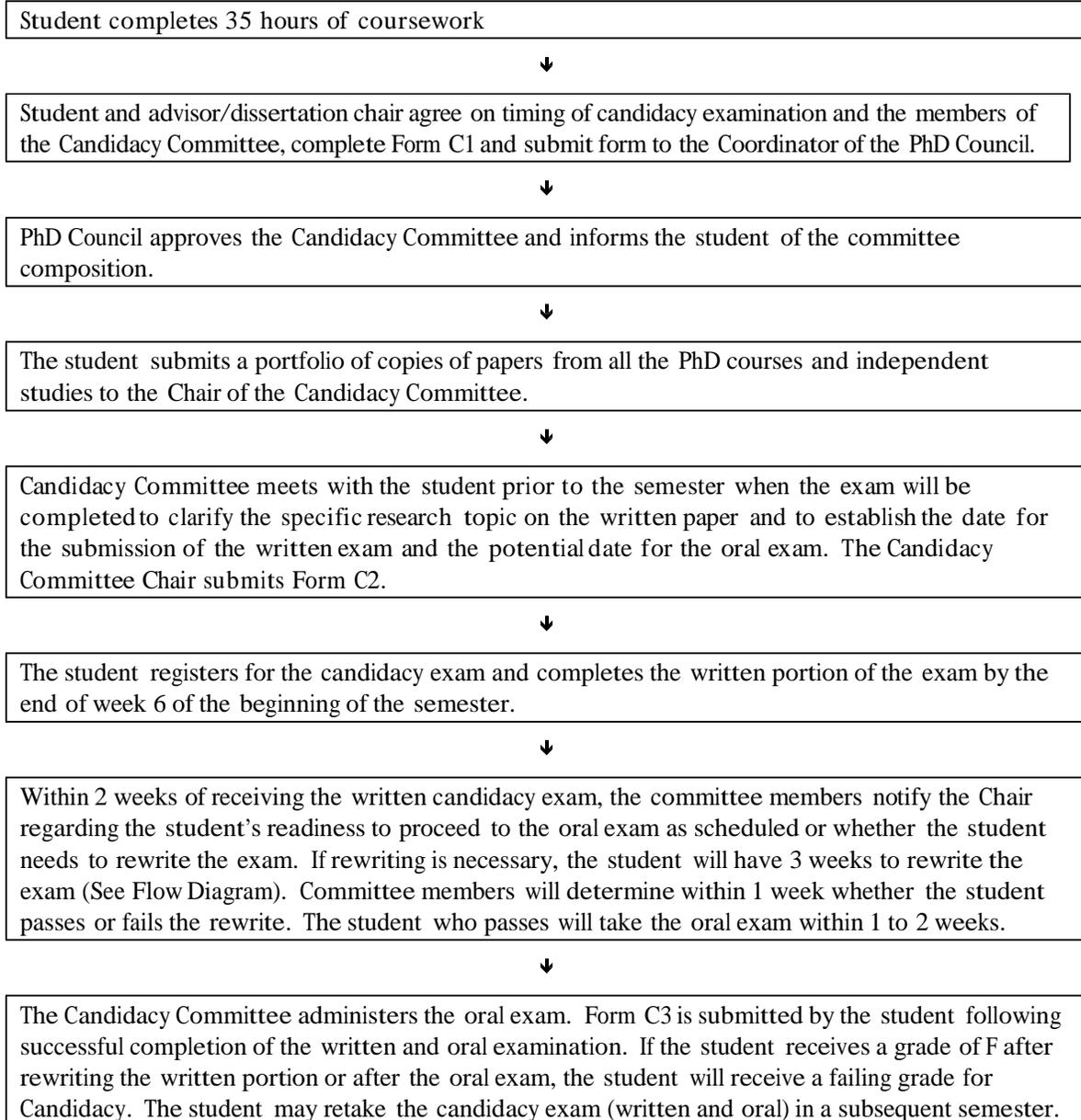
The student is notified of the outcome of the candidacy examination immediately following the oral examination. The student may receive a grade of “Pass” or “Fail.” All Candidacy Committee members must agree on the final grade. The student who passes the written examination on the first attempt and fails the oral examination may retake the oral examination within 2 weeks following the first oral examination. The student who fails the second oral examination must retake the candidacy examination (written and oral) in another semester. Similarly, if the student fails the oral examination after rewriting the paper, the student must retake the candidacy examination (written and oral) in another semester (See Flow Chart and Flow Diagram).

Upon successful completion of the candidacy examination, the student submits Form C3 to the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs and is admitted as a candidate for the PhD degree. Students then proceed to dissertation proposal defense and dissertation.

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Candidacy Exam Flow Chart



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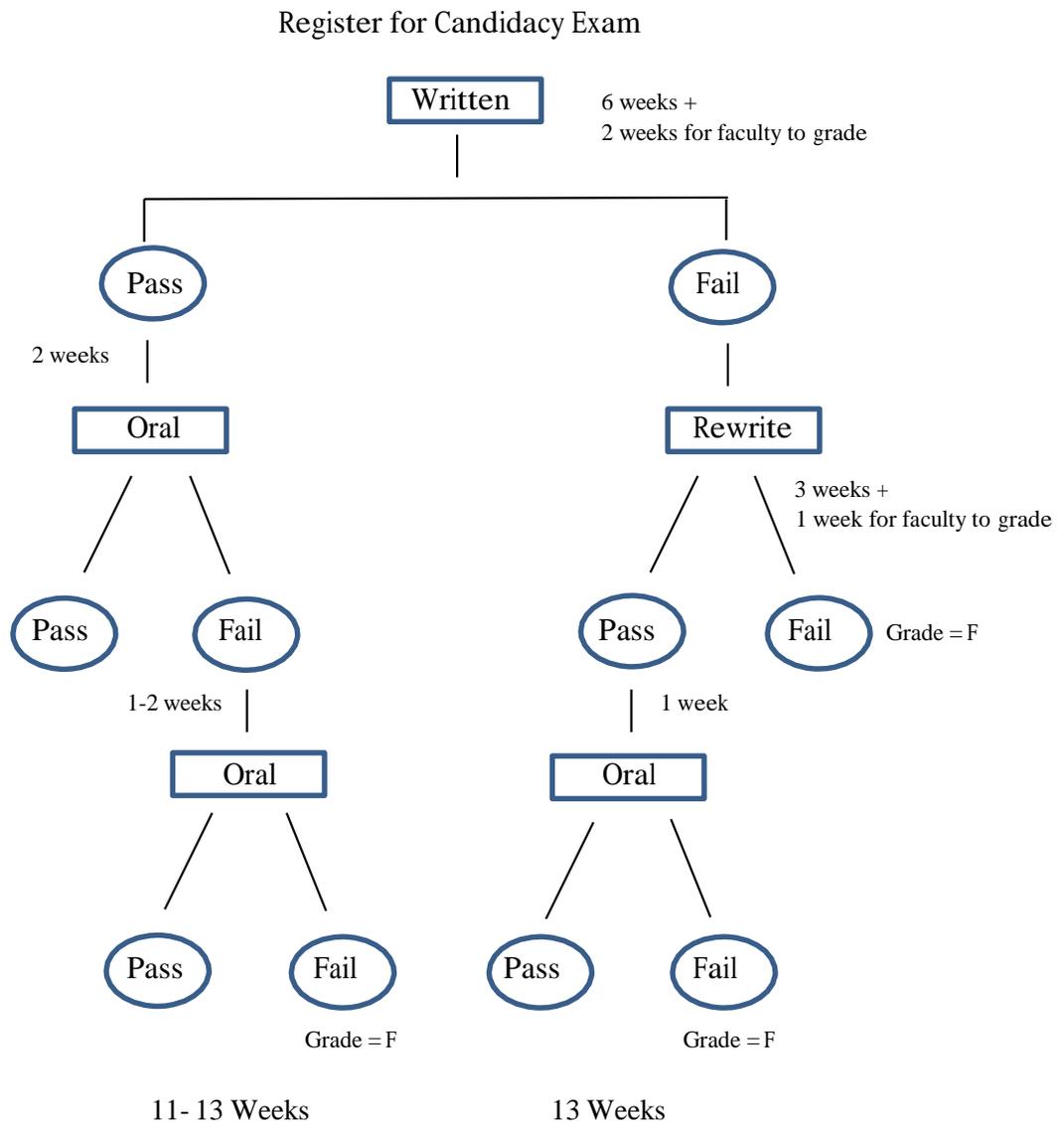
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Flow Diagram for Candidacy



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Form C1

School of Nursing PhD Program

Student Request for Candidacy Examination

(To be completed following student/advisor meeting)

Student: _____

Advisor: _____

Dissertation Chair: _____

Research Area: _____

Requested Committee Members

Chairperson: _____

Member: _____

Member: _____

Member: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____

Date: _____

This form, together with the biographical information on the suggested committee members, is to be submitted to the Chairperson of the PhD Council. When the Committee Membership is approved by the PhD Council, the form will be forwarded to the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs.

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Form C2

School of Nursing PhD Program

Notification of Candidacy Examination Topic and Committee

Student: _____

Advisor: _____

Dissertation Chair: _____

Topic of Written Examination:

Date Written Examination Due: _____

Expected Date of Oral Examination: _____

Committee Members

Chairperson: _____

Member: _____

Member: _____

Member: _____

Candidacy Committee Chairperson distributes original to the PhD Council Chairperson, copy to Student, Candidacy Committee Members, Advisor, Dissertation Chair, and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs.

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Form C3

School of Nursing PhD Program

Evaluation of Candidacy Examination

Student: _____

Written: Pass: _____ Fail: _____

Rewrite: Pass: _____ Fail: _____

Oral: Pass: _____ Fail: _____

Oral retake: Pass: _____ Fail: _____

Signature Candidacy Committee Members

Chairperson: _____ Date: _____

Member: _____ Date: _____

Member: _____ Date: _____

Member: _____ Date: _____

Comments and Recommendations:

Vice Dean for Academic Affairs: _____