NSG 9998
COMPREHENSIVE EXAM – GUIDELINES

1.0 GOAL

The comprehensive examination (CE) allows students to demonstrate the depth and breadth of nursing knowledge, their ability to integrate concepts, principles, theories, and apply these to nursing issues.

2.0 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The graduate student must be registered for the comprehensive exam (NSG 9998) – mandatory component of Nursing doctoral program. This requirement should be successfully completed in the fourth session (Fall of 2nd year) and must be completed in order to continue the program and register to NSG 9999 – PhD Thesis.

3.0 EXAM COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

3.1 The thesis supervisor(s) or co-supervisor(s) is responsible for (a) forming the comprehensive exam committee including the Chair; and (b) informing the Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs, School of Nursing (graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca) that the process has begun.

3.2 The committee shall consists of three (3) voting members: the supervisor OR co-supervisor (if applicable), one thesis committee member (if the thesis committee has been formed) and a member who is not and does not plan to be on the student’s thesis committee.

3.3 All committee members must be regular/adjunct professors in the School of Nursing at the University of Ottawa qualified to supervise graduate students.

3.4 If an external member of the University of Ottawa participates, he/she must be a regular professor qualified to supervise graduate students in his/her own university.

3.5 The Assistant Director, Graduate Programs (or other member of the School Executive Committee) may attend the meetings but does not have a vote.

4.0 ROLE OF THE CHAIR: PRIOR TO THE EXAM START DATE

The Chair:

4.1 Convenes the members of the committee to develop and/or agree on the final version of the exam questions in conformity with the exam requirements and to set all exam time/date deadlines. The exam questions are written after considering the graduate course assignments already completed and to avoid duplication. To help prepare the CE committee for drafting the questions, some ask the student to attend the first 15 minutes to present an overview of their completed course assignments and proposed thesis. The student cannot be present when the exam questions are being written.
4.2 Submits the questions and the signed Comprehensive Exam - Committee Composition form to the Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs, School of Nursing (graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca), for approval by the Assistant Director, Graduate Programs.

4.3 The Comprehensive Exam - Committee Composition form must include the following information:
   a) The names of the exam committee members;
   b) The date, time and method of receiving the exam;
   c) The date, time, location and the address where to submit the written component of the ES indicating the required format (paper or electronic).
   d) Signatures of the CE Chair and the student.

4.4 Provides the exam to the student on the scheduled date.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PROCEDURES

5.0 WRITTEN COMPONENT COMPLETED AT HOME

5.1 The committee prepares three questions one of which is compulsory and addresses knowledge in the nursing discipline. The remaining two questions are designed to assess the integration of nursing knowledge, research methods, and the student’s program field. The student will answer one of these two questions. The questions are relevant to the student’s overall plans for their thesis proposal but the questions do not duplicate work already completed in the assignments of the PhD courses.

5.2 The student prepares two essays that are each 15-18 pages in length (double spaced; 2.54cm margins) excluding references, abstract, and appendices, using APA format. A table of contents is not required. If one or both essays are longer than 18 pages, the submitted written component of the comprehensive exam is non-satisfactory (registered as a failure), and the student must write a new exam.

5.3 During the CE process the student must not discuss the exam with any members of either the comprehensive exam or the thesis committees. However, the student is permitted to contact the thesis supervisor for questions that are not directly related to the comprehensive exam. For matters related to the comprehensive exam, the student should contact only the Chair of the Comprehensive Exam Committee.

5.4 The student has a maximum of 4 weeks to complete the written portion of the exam. This is done, when both essays are submitted to the Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs (graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca). The student deposits a minimum of one paper copy of the exam, signed and dated, and one electronic copy (by email) on or before the due date. The number of additional paper copies (up to a total of 4) required will be based on the preferences of the committee.
members and should be indicated on the Comprehensive Exam – Committee Composition form.

5.5 The Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs, will distribute copies of the exam to the committee members.

5.6 All committee members have two weeks to submit their independent evaluation of the written portion of the student’s comprehensive exam only to the chair using the School of Nursing Doctoral Program Evaluation criteria for comprehensive exam (NSG 9998). Examiners do not share their reports (or verbal evaluation) with each other until after all reports are submitted to the chair.

5.7 The chair holds a meeting of the committee within two weeks of receiving the committee members’ independent evaluations.

5.8 The committee will grant one of two following verdicts for the written component of the examination (by majority of the three votes): 1) Satisfactory for both essays (accepted for oral exam) or; 2) Not satisfactory for one or both essays (new written exam). If there is a conflict, the chair must make the final decision.

5.9 After the committee meeting, examiners must remove any reference to pass/satisfactory or fail/non-satisfactory in their report for individual essays. They may also want to make minor changes based on the committee discussion. However, reports with contradictory comments across examiners may be provided to the student.

5.10 The chair will inform the student in writing of the committee’s decision and provide evaluative comments within two weeks of the meeting when the verdict is determined.

5.11 In the event that a student is unsuccessful on the written portion of the exam committee members must provide the reasons in writing.

5.12 A student who is unsuccessful with the written component of the CE may take a written exam the following semester and no later than session #6. The exam committee will draw up new questions and complete a new Comprehensive Exam-Committee Composition form and submit for approval. The new exam committee includes the supervisor and other examiners may differ from the original committee.

6.0 ORAL COMPONENT

6.1 The oral component of the exam can only take place when the committee members have reached a successful verdict for the written component of the comprehensive exam.

6.2 The oral portion of the comprehensive exam is scheduled for no later than 2 weeks after the student has been notified that the written exam is satisfactory.

6.3 The oral portion of the exam will consist of a 20 minute presentation by the student and is intended to provide an overview of the essay (including the exam question) and may address some of the evaluative comments made by the CE committee. The oral exam is an opportunity for the student to expand her/his point of view.
6.4 The committee will then ask the candidate questions to clarify or expand on the answers provided in the written portion and/or the presentation. Each committee member asks questions for a minimum of 10 minutes (maximum of about 15 minutes) and there may be 2 or 3 rounds of questions starting with the examiner who is external to the thesis committee.

6.5 Immediately after the oral exam, the three (3) voting members plus chair will convene in camera and discuss the student’s performance and will grant one of two following verdicts (by majority of three votes): 1) Satisfactory – pass oral component for both essays or; 2) Not Satisfactory (for one or both essays presented in the oral exam) - new oral exam.

6.6 The chair will then invite the student to join the committee members and verbally provide the verdict.

6.7 In the event that a student is unsuccessful on the oral portion of the comprehensive, committee members must provide the reasons in writing.

6.8 A student who is unsuccessful may apply to take an oral exam in the same semester but no later than the following session. (See comprehensive exam evaluation scenarios attached).

7.0 FINAL GRADE REPORT

The final grade of the comprehensive exam will either be satisfactory (S) or not satisfactory (NS). The final evaluation results must be written on the official University of Ottawa School of Nursing Report of the Comprehensive Examination form.

The chair submits the final grade report to the Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs in person or by scan attached to an email (graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca).

The Assistant Director, Graduate Programs signs the submitted report.
8.0 COMPREHENSIVE EXAM EVALUATION SCENARIOS

**Written Exam**

- Satisfactory: both CE questions
  - Oral Exam
    - Satisfactory
      - Pass Comprehensive Exam
    - Not Satisfactory
      - New Oral Exam

- Not Satisfactory
  - New Written Exam
    - Satisfactory: both CE questions
      - Oral Exam
        - Satisfactory
          - Pass Comprehensive Exam
        - Not Satisfactory
          - New Oral Exam

- Not Satisfactory
  - Fail Comprehensive Exam
    - Withdraw from program
## Appendix: Comprehensive Examination Timeline Worksheet

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<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Chair sends the comprehensive exam questions to the student in the morning (usually about 9am).</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Four weeks later, the student submits the written component of the comprehensive exam to the Administrative Assistant Graduate Programs in the School of Nursing at <a href="mailto:graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca">graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca</a> and the chair of the CE committee (by 12 noon by email) and if necessary paper copies are dropped off.</td>
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<td>The Chair sends the CE committee members the written component of the exam to review with the CE criteria.</td>
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<td>Two weeks later, the CE committee members submit their report to the chair by email.</td>
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<td>Within two weeks, the committee meets to discuss the verdict (satisfactory for both essays or non-satisfactory for both essays).</td>
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<td>The Chair sends the verdict to the doctoral student with the individual reports of the examiners within two weeks of the committee’s meeting.</td>
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<td>Within two weeks of receiving the report if the written component is satisfactory, the oral component of the comprehensive exam is presented two weeks after the students has received the committee’s report.</td>
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