NSG 9998
COMPREHENSIVE EXAM – GUIDELINES

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.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The graduate student must register for the comprehensive exam (NSG 9998). This is mandatory in the School of Nursing doctoral program and should be successfully completed in the fourth session (Fall of 2nd year). It is completed before registration to NSG 9999 – PhD Thesis.

EXAM COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

- The thesis 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.
- **The committee shall consist 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;**
- All committee members must be regular/adjunct professors in the School of Nursing at the University of Ottawa qualified to supervise graduate students.
- If an external member participates, he/she must be a regular professor qualified to supervise graduate students in his/her own university.
- The Assistant Director, Graduate Programs (or other member of the School Executive Committee) may attend the meetings but does not have a vote.

ROLE OF THE CHAIR: PRIOR TO THE EXAM START DATE

The Chair:
- 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;
- **Submits the questions and the signed Comprehensive Exam - Committee Composition form** to the Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs, School of

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Nursing (graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca), for approval by the Assistant Director, Graduate Programs.

- 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 format (paper or electronic) for submission of the completed written component.
  d) Signatures of the CE Chair and the student.

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

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PROCEDURES

The CE is a take-home exam with an oral component.

1) Written component

- 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.
- The student prepares two essays that are each 15-18 pages in length (double spaced) excluding references, abstract, and appendices, using APA format.
- 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.
- 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.
- The Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs, will distribute copies of the exam to the Chair and comprehensive exam members.
- 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).

- The chair holds a meeting of the committee within two weeks of receiving the committee members’ independent evaluations.
- The committee will grant one of two verdicts (by majority of the three votes): 1) Satisfactory (accepted for oral exam) or; 2) Not satisfactory (new written exam). If there is a conflict, the chair must make the final decision.
- The chair will inform the student in writing of the committee’s decision and evaluative comments within two weeks of the meeting when the verdict is determined.
- In the event that a student is unsuccessful on the written portion of the exam committee members must provide the reasons in writing.
- A student who is unsuccessful 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 members of the new exam committee may differ from the original committee.

2) Oral component

- 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.
- 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.
- The oral portion of the exam will consist of a 20 minute presentation by the student and is intended to address the evaluative comments made by the CE committee. The oral exam is an opportunity for the student to expand her/his point of view.
- 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 and there may be 2 or 3 rounds of questions.
- 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 verdicts (by majority of three votes): 1) Satisfactory – pass comprehensive exam or; 2) Not Satisfactory – new oral exam.
- The chair will then invite the student to join the committee members and verbally provide the verdict.
- In the event that a student is unsuccessful on the oral portion of the comprehensive, committee members must provide the reasons in writing.
- 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).
3) 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.
Comprehensive Exam Evaluation Scenarios

Written Exam

- Satisfactory
  - Oral Exam
    - Satisfactory
      - Pass Comprehensive Exam
    - Not Satisfactory
      - New Oral Exam
        - Satisfactory
          - Pass Comprehensive Exam
        - Not Satisfactory
          - Fail Comprehensive Exam
            - Withdraw from program

- Not Satisfactory
  - New Written Exam
    - Satisfactory
      - Fail Comprehensive Exam
        - Withdraw from program
    - Not Satisfactory
      - Withdraw from program