

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

COLLEGE OF NURSING **PhD Student Handbook**

2026 – 2027



Nurse Leaders Transforming Wellbeing and Environments

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Introduction

The College of Nursing (CON) Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Student Handbook provides academic information, policies, and procedures for the PhD in Nursing program at the University of Rhode Island (URI). It also serves as a guide to resources within the College and across the university. Students are responsible for the regulations listed within this handbook. This handbook serves as a guide to the PhD program, outlining the key requirements, milestones, processes, and expectations from program entry through dissertation defense and degree completion.

University Policies

In addition to this handbook, all graduate students are responsible for the regulations listed in the [URI Graduate School Handbook](#), a collection of policies that relate to student life at URI. These policies outline the general responsibilities of being a student at URI. All students are expected to have read and understood both policies before coming to campus.

Program Contacts

At URI, graduate programs leading to a PhD are overseen by the faculty of the CON using a shared governance model. The PhD in Nursing program is administered by the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs with input from the faculty and the Dean of the CON.

The Associate Dean for Graduate Programs is responsible for the overall direction of the PhD program, including oversight of policies, curriculum development, student admission and progression, and strategic planning. The PhD Program Committee supports the Associate Dean by maintaining and monitoring the program for rigor and quality, developing and refining curricula, and ensuring alignment with university, regulatory, and accrediting standards.

Students are encouraged to consult with the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs as needed throughout their time in the program. The Graduate Program Office is also available to assist students with administrative and program-related inquiries.

Graduate Program Office Contacts

Dr. Danny G. Willis, Dean, College of Nursing
danny.willis@uri.edu

Dr. Denise Coppa, Interim Associate Dean for Graduate Programs
dcoppa@uri.edu

Ms. Cassie White, Coordinator, Graduate Nursing Programs
cwhite481@uri.edu

Ms. Shandra Pelagio, Higher Education Administrative Assistant
shandra@uri.edu

Disclaimer

The policies and procedures described in this manual are continually revised and updated. The CON reserves the right to make changes affecting policies, fees, curriculum, or any other matters announced in this publication.

Student Services

Academic Success	
Help Desk	401-874-4357
Academic Advising	401-874-2993
Academic Enhancement Center	401-874-2367
Enrollment Services	401-874-9500
Career Services	401-277-5015
Office of Ombudsman	
Libraries	
Robert L. Carothers Library & Learning Commons	401-874-2672
Pell Marine Science Library	401-874-6161
Health and Wellness	
Health Services	401-874-2246
Counseling Center	401-874-2288
Disability Services	401-874-5694
Student Life	
Gender and Sexuality Center	401-874-2894
Women's Center	401-874-2097
Division of Student Affairs	401-874-2427
Office of International Students & Scholars	401-874-2018
Office of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, and Diversity	401-874-2442
Graduate Student Associations	
Graduate Assistants United	401-874-2826

The PhD Roadmap

**Recommended, based on a full-time program of study. Students should always consult the URI Graduate School Academic Calendar and other Graduate School resources for timelines, requirements, and deadlines, as these dates and requirements may change.*

WHEN*	MILESTONE	DETAILS
Years 1–2	<u>Coursework</u>	Complete core and elective coursework, as well as <u>150 hours of mentored research</u> (see p. 11).
Semesters 2–3	<u>Choose Your Major Professor</u>	Select a major professor by the end of your third semester. Your major professor chairs your comprehensive exam and dissertation committee.
Semesters 3–4	<u>Form Your Dissertation Committee</u>	Committee members are added in consultation with your major professor and must meet Graduate School requirements.
End of semester 3	<u>Submit Your Program of Study</u>	Submit your Program of Study <u>form</u> to the URI Graduate Program office.
After Coursework	<u>Comprehensive Examination</u> <i>Written + Oral</i>	A written exam and an oral exam covering your coursework. Passing both advances you to PhD candidacy.
After Candidacy	<u>Dissertation Proposal</u> <i>Written + Oral</i>	Present your research plan to your committee, a written proposal and an oral defense of it. Approval confirms your research direction.
Before Data Collection	<u>IRB Approval</u>	Research involving human participants requires approval from the Institutional Review Board before data collection begins.
Dissertation Phase	<u>Dissertation Research</u>	Conduct your research under your committee's guidance, meeting regularly to track progress and work through problems as they arise.
Final Phase	<u>Dissertation Defense</u> <i>Written + Oral</i>	Submit your dissertation and defend it before your committee: a written manuscript and an oral defense. Required revisions follow a successful defense.
Graduation	Diploma Conferred Celebrate!! You did it!	Submit your final, revised dissertation electronically to the Graduate School (See the Graduate Student Calendar for deadlines).

College of Nursing

This CON Student Handbook serves as a comprehensive guide for students enrolled in the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Nursing program at the University of Rhode Island (URI). It aims to provide students with:

- 1) An overview of the College and its history, vision, mission, and values.
- 2) A description of the competencies and outcomes students are expected to achieve prior to graduation; and
- 3) A description of the College's academic and professional policies.

All students are expected to review the CON PhD Student Handbook at the start of the academic year and as necessary throughout the academic year. Each student assumes responsibility for understanding the information contained in this Handbook. Students are expected to comply with all policies and curricular requirements that were in place at the time they matriculated into the CON, although students have the option to follow updated policies, curricula, etc. Procedures change periodically; all students must follow the current procedures being followed in any academic year. The PhD Student Handbook may be accessed electronically on the CON Graduate Student Brightspace page. This location contains the most up-to-date version of the Handbook and supersedes all other versions. The CON reserves the right to add, delete, revise, or change the information, including policies and procedures set forth in this Handbook at any time. Any questions pertaining to any of the contents of this Handbook should be directed to the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs.

History

In September 1945, the University began its first nursing program with nine students in the School of Home Economics. In 1947, the Division of Nursing was established and Miss Louisa White, Associate Professor, was appointed Director. The College began offering a master's degree in nursing in 1970, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in 1985, and a Doctor of Nurse Practice (DNP) in 2010. Until 1968, students lived in Providence during the clinical portion of the program and most of the faculty had offices at Rhode Island Hospital. In 1963, on the Kingston campus, Fogarty Hall was dedicated, and office space was provided for the Dean, several faculty members, and two secretaries. White Hall, named in honor of the first director of the nursing program, was designed specifically for the CON and dedicated in 1977. In 2017, URI CON expanded to an additional location in Providence – the Rhode Island Nursing Education Center (RINEC). RINEC is now home to the CON graduate programs.

Accreditation

The University of Rhode Island is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). The College of Nursing's PhD program is included within the University's institutional accreditation. The PhD program is guided by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) *Research-Focused Doctoral Program in Nursing: Pathways to Excellence* (AACN, 2022).

Mission Statement

To prepare nurses to excel as outstanding and compassionate clinicians, scholars and leaders who will enhance the health and health care of individuals, families, communities, and populations, both locally and globally.

Tagline

Nurse Leaders Transforming Wellbeing and Environments

Values

- Social justice, diversity, inclusivity & civic engagement.
- Respectful, ethical, humanistic & compassionate care.
- Intellectual curiosity, innovation & scholarly inquiry.
- Leadership, lifelong learning & excellence in practice.

Vision Statement

The URI CON is a dynamic catalyst for improving health and transforming healthcare through innovation and excellence in education, knowledge development, discovery and professional practice to meet the needs of a global society.

PhD Program Outcomes

The PhD program prepares graduates to generate, evaluate, and disseminate knowledge that advances nursing science, practice, and education. Students demonstrate these competencies through coursework, mentored research, comprehensive examination, and dissertation requirements. Dissertations are expected to be scientifically sound, methodologically rigorous, and suitable for scholarly dissemination. The following program outcomes define the knowledge, skills, and professional capabilities students develop:

- **Knowledge and Inquiry:** Expand the scientific knowledge base within and beyond the discipline through generation and dissemination of relevant theoretical knowledge and independent and/or collaborative research.
- **Nursing Practice:** Produce knowledge that has relevance for nursing and health care.
- **Professionalism:** Develop knowledge while upholding ethical and social responsibility.
- **Communication and Collaboration:** Disseminate knowledge generated from individual and/or team science.
- **Societal and Global Influences:** Provide leadership in generating and disseminating nursing knowledge to guide research and/or policy related to societal and global health and health care.
- **Leadership:** Assume leadership in conducting and disseminating high impact, translational and innovative research and scholarship that addresses health and health care challenges.

PhD Program Curriculum

The PhD program includes four main components: 1) coursework, 2) examinations, 3) experiential learning and the 4) dissertation. The PhD degree requires completion of a minimum of **49 credits** beyond the master's degree. The Ph.D. program consists of a minimum of 34 credits of course work, including core and elective courses and 15 credits of dissertation research.

The core courses in theory and research methods provide the basic knowledge and skills necessary for generating new knowledge in nursing. In addition, a minimum of 6 credits in advanced statistics and 9 credits of cognates/electives are required. Students are also required to complete a minimum of 150 hours of mentored experiential research training.

Following the second year of full-time coursework (completion of all required courses), all PhD students complete a Comprehensive Examination (written and oral). Successful completion of the "Comps" signal that the student is ready to enter PhD "candidacy" and undertake the dissertation. The program culminates with the completion dissertation research (15 credits).

To guide academic progress and career planning, all students are supported using an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Students are required to complete the program of study that is in place at the time they matriculate. Any course substitutions must be approved and listed as such on the student's individual program of study.

Core Courses (19 credits)

- NUR 600 – Philosophical Foundations of Healthcare Research (3 credits)
- NUR 601 – Theoretical Foundations of Nursing Science (3 credits)
- NUR 649 – Responsible Conduct of Nursing and Health Research (1 credit)
- NUR 650 – Research Roles and Methods in Nursing (3 credits)
- NUR 651 – Advanced Methods in Nursing Research I (Qualitative Methods) (3 credits)
- NUR 652 – Advanced Methods in Nursing Research II (Quantitative Methods) (3 credits)
- NUR 661 – Integrative Review in Nursing Science (3 credits)

Advanced Statistics Sequence (6 credits)

Students must complete a two-course statistics sequence. In most cases, students should follow the recommended sequence as determined by the CON. Students should consult with their faculty advisor(s) to choose the appropriate statistics sequence based on prior experience and the type of dissertation.

- NUR 655 – Applied Data Management and Analysis I
- NUR 656 – Applied Data Management and Analysis II
- With approval, an equivalent two-course statistics sequence offered through another department may be substituted.

Cognates & Electives (9 credits)

Cognates are graduate level courses that are offered in the CON that are not core requirements but enhance the PhD student's knowledge of *nursing science* and/or related methodologies.

Electives are graduate courses that are offered in other departments that complement learning of the core PhD courses and may address a unique gap in knowledge or skills specific to the focus of the dissertation research (e.g., health policy, epidemiology, or bioethics).

Courses must be graduate level (typically 500-level and above) and taught by doctorally prepared faculty.

Dissertation Seminar (3 credits)

Dissertation seminar is designed to prepare students to develop, submit and defend a viable dissertation proposal. Although the course is not required, students are strongly encouraged to take it before undertaking independent dissertation research.

- NUR 689 – Dissertation Seminar (3 credits)

Dissertation Research (15 credits)

NUR 699 provides students with dedicated time to conduct their independent dissertation research under the guidance of their dissertation committee.

- NUR 699 – Dissertation Research (15 credits)

Non-Credit Requirements

Mentored Research Experience

Students are required to complete a **minimum of 150 hours of mentored research training**; this is a 0-credit requirement. This hands-on experience, guided by qualified URI faculty member(s), aims to help students develop the essential skills needed for independent dissertation research. These hours are strictly for skill-building purposes and may **not** be used for dissertation data collection or to pursue your own research projects and ideas. The 150 hours **must be completed prior to your dissertation proposal defense**.

Students are expected to identify their own research mentors. We encourage you to network with faculty whose research interests align with yours. You can work with any PhD-prepared faculty from the CON, or other departments at URI, who hold a faculty appointment and are actively engaged in research. Mentors must have an **ongoing research project** that offers learning opportunities appropriate for first- or second-year PhD students, with an emphasis on developing research competencies. Depending on the nature of the work and if agreeable with your mentor, some research activities may be completed remotely. You are encouraged to work with **more than one research mentor** over the course of your program for a broader range of learning experiences. If you encounter challenges in finding a suitable mentor or project, please reach out to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs or the PhD Committee for assistance.

Activities should be appropriate for PhD students, with an emphasis on acquiring and developing skills that are necessary for a new researcher. Such activities may include conducting focus groups or interviews, building a survey, survey administration, coding and managing qualitative

and/or quantitative data, preparing IRB applications, preparing manuscripts and presentations, etc. Literature reviews should be limited. Activities that could be undertaken by an undergraduate student (e.g., filing, preparing mailings) are not sufficient to meet this requirement. Students should discuss opportunities with their faculty advisor. Prior to beginning the mentored research experience, the student **must** obtain written approval for their proposed research experience and objectives from both their advisor and the CON Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. These forms can be found on the Graduate Program Brightspace page.

Full-time or Part-time PhD Study

Full-time study provides students with greater opportunity for sustained engagement in doctoral coursework, scholarship, research training, scholarly colloquia, professional development, and the intellectual life of the PhD program. Students are encouraged to pursue the PhD degree on a full-time basis whenever possible. “Full-time” enrollment is defined by the Graduate School as being registered for 6 or more credits per semester.

A full-time program of study is designed to allow students to complete the required coursework within two years, followed by dissertation proposal development, dissertation research, and completion of the dissertation. However, the specific timeline will vary based on each student's program of study, research interests, dissertation progress, and other academic requirements.

Students who wish to complete coursework in two years are encouraged to limit outside work commitments to summers, semester breaks and weekends. For students engaged in clinical practice, no more than one day per week of clinical work is recommended during the academic year.

Part-time study may be appropriate for students who have significant professional, family, or other commitments that make full-time enrollment impractical. Part-time students should work closely with their advisor and the PhD program to develop a feasible plan of study and establish a realistic timeline for completing coursework, developing the dissertation proposal, conducting dissertation research, and completing the dissertation. Because course sequencing and course availability may affect progression, students pursuing the degree part-time should consult with their advisor before reducing their course load or deviating from the recommended sequence of study.

Regardless of enrollment status, all PhD students are expected to make consistent academic progress, which is demonstrated through meeting course and program requirements, maintaining regular communication with their advisor, and participating in scholarly activities appropriate to their stage of doctoral study.

Time Limit

All PhD students (full-time and part-time) have a maximum of seven (7) years to complete the PhD degree requirements including the dissertation. The 7-year limit to degree completion can only be extended under a few specific circumstances including official Leave of Absence (LOA) for serious illness and/or active-duty military service. Students should review the [URI Graduate School Handbook Section 7.51](#) for further details.

Student Progress

The CON uses **Individualized Development Plans (IDP)** to support student success and track progress throughout the PhD program. The IDP is a personalized tool that helps each student set goals, monitor progress, and engage in meaningful mentorship aligned with the PhD Core Competencies and program milestones.

Students begin by setting goals for the semester with their advisor, and the IDP serves as a flexible “contract” between the student and advisor before creation of the PhD committee.

At the end of each semester, both students and their relevant course faculty are asked to reflect on progress. Additionally, the IDP is reviewed by the PhD Committee to provide tailored guidance and support throughout the doctoral journey. Students then meet with their advisor to review feedback and suggestions and set new goals. This process reflects the program’s commitment to flexible, student-centered career development and scholarly growth.

Importantly, the IDP is a living document and can be adjusted as the student’s goals and ideas evolve. Students are encouraged to work closely with their advisors to develop and regularly update their IDPs.

Example Plan of Study

**Full-time Program*

First Year – Fall Semester		
<u>Course #</u>	<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Credits</u>
NUR 600	Philosophical Foundations of Healthcare Research	3
NUR 650	Research Roles and Methods in Nursing	3
NUR 655 or similar	Applied Data Management & Analysis I / Statistics I	3
	Total Semester Credits	9
First Year – Spring Semester		
NUR 601	Theoretical Foundations of Nursing Science	3
NUR 652	Advanced Methods in Nursing Research II (Quant)	3
NUR 656 or similar	Applied Data Management & Analysis II / Statistics II	3
NUR 649	Responsible Conduct of Research in Nursing & Health	1
	Total Semester Credits	10
Second Year – Fall Semester		
NUR 651	Advanced Methods in Nursing Research I (Qual)	3
NUR 661	Integrative Review for Nursing Science	3
xxxxxx	Elective/Cognate	3
	Total Semester Credits	9
Second Year – Spring Semester		
xxxxxx	Elective/Cognate	3
xxxxxx	Elective/Cognate	3
NUR 698	Dissertation Seminar	3
	Total Semester Credits	9
Comprehensive Examination		
Third Year – Fall Semester		
NUR 699	Dissertation Research	9
Third Year – Spring Semester		
NUR 699	Dissertation Research	6
Each Semester until Graduation		
CRG 999	Continual Registration	1
	PhD Program Total Credits (post-Master's):	≥ 49

Advisors, Major Professors, and Committees

The Temporary Advisor

The responsibilities of the temporary advisor are outlined in the Graduate School Manual, Section 8.21. The summary below provides a brief overview of the role and is intended as practical guidance. Always refer to the Graduate School Manual for the complete and authoritative requirements.

Who Serves as the Temporary Advisor?

Upon admission to the PhD program, each student is assigned a temporary advisor by the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. The Associate Dean will make every effort to assign a temporary advisor whose area of scholarship and research is as closely aligned as possible with the student's stated academic and research interests.

Responsibilities of the Temporary Advisor

The temporary advisor:

- Helps the student become familiar with the PhD program, including program requirements, expectations, and available resources.
- Assists the student with course selection and provides initial guidance regarding the student's program of study.
- Meets with the student regularly while they are in the temporary advising period (semesters 1-3).
- Works with the student to complete the Individual Development Plan (IDP) and uses the IDP to help the student identify academic, professional, scholarly, and career development goals.
- Assists the student in identifying and selecting a major professor, including helping the student consider faculty whose expertise and research interests align with their goals.
 - *Note:* The temporary advisor may become the student's major professor if the student's scholarly and research interests are aligned with the faculty member's expertise and the faculty member agrees to serve in that role.
- Supports the student's transition to a major professor as the student begins to establish their scholarly and research direction.

The Major Professor

The responsibilities of the major professor are described in the Graduate School Manual, Section 8.30. The guidance below highlights selected responsibilities and expectations for major professors within the PhD program. Students and faculty should always refer to the Graduate School Manual for the complete and authoritative description of the major professor's responsibilities and requirements.

Who Can Serve as a Major Professor?

The major professor must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member in the CON with graduate faculty status. The major professor should have research expertise and scholarly interests aligned with the student's academic and research goals and sufficient capacity to provide doctoral mentorship.

The major professor provides guidance throughout the doctoral program, including development of the Program of Study, preparation for comprehensive examinations, development of the dissertation proposal, conduct of dissertation research, and completion of the dissertation.

In some circumstances, students may have co-major professors when appropriate to their program of study or research. At least one co-major professor must be from the CON, and co-major professor arrangements must meet the Graduate School's requirements for doctoral committee composition.

Major Professor Responsibilities

The major professor is responsible for:

- **Guiding the student's overall progress** through the PhD program, including coursework, independent study, research, scholarly activities, examinations, dissertation proposal development, and dissertation research.
- **Serving as chair of the doctoral committee** and, in consultation with the student, recommending additional committee members in accordance with Graduate School requirements.
- **Working with the student and doctoral committee to develop the Program of Study**, ensuring that it meets University, Graduate School, and program requirements and is submitted within the required timeframe.
- **Overseeing comprehensive examinations**, including working with the doctoral committee to organize, prepare, administer, and evaluate the written and oral examinations and communicating examination outcomes as required.
- **Guiding the development of the dissertation proposal and dissertation**, including providing appropriate mentorship and coordinating feedback from the doctoral committee.
- **Ensuring compliance with university requirements for research**, including requirements related to research involving human participants or live animals, when applicable.
- **Coordinating the dissertation defense**, including working with the student, doctoral committee, and Graduate School to schedule the defense and submit the completed dissertation.
- **Guiding revisions to the dissertation** following the dissertation defense and helping ensure that all final degree requirements are completed.

Forming a Doctoral Program Committee

The responsibilities and composition of the doctoral program committee are outlined in the Graduate School Manual, Section 8.43.2. The summary below provides a brief overview of the committee's role and is intended as practical guidance. Always refer to the Graduate School Manual for the complete and authoritative requirements.

Who Serves on the Doctoral Program Committee?

The doctoral program committee is established after the student selects a major professor and remains the student's committee throughout the doctoral program. Students should consider faculty expertise, methodological experience, and relevant research interests when discussing potential committee members with their major professor.

The committee must include at least:

- **Major Professor:** Serves as chair of the doctoral program committee.
- **Second Committee Member:** A member of the Graduate Faculty from the CON, or a closely related field (e.g., health sciences).
- **Third Committee Member:** A member of the Graduate Faculty from *outside the CON*, unless an alternative arrangement is approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Following acknowledgment by the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, the committee recommendations are submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School for approval. **The form requesting establishment of a student's doctoral program committee can be found [here](#).**

Responsibilities of the Doctoral Program Committee

The doctoral program committee provides ongoing academic and research guidance throughout the student's doctoral training. The committee:

- **Helps develop and review the student's Program of Study**, ensuring that it meets degree requirements and reflects the student's individual academic and research needs.
- **Guides preparation for the comprehensive examination**, when applicable, and participates in the oral comprehensive examination.
- **Prepares and evaluates the written comprehensive examination** in conjunction with the major professor.
- **Reviews and approves the dissertation question and proposed research**, ensuring that the proposed work is appropriately defined, feasible, and consistent with University requirements.
- **Guides development of the dissertation proposal**, including the literature review, research design, methodology, and overall scope of the proposed research.
- **Provides guidance throughout dissertation research**, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and other aspects of conducting the research.
- **Provides guidance on dissertation writing**, including the organization, content, and format of the dissertation.

- **Reviews the completed dissertation** and determines whether it is ready to proceed to the oral defense.
- **Participates in the dissertation defense** and helps determine whether the dissertation meets the requirements for the doctoral degree.
- **Ensures that required revisions following the dissertation defense are completed** before the final dissertation is submitted.

The doctoral program committee is expected to meet with the student **at least once each year to review progress**. The major professor is responsible for scheduling this annual review. If a student has not yet established a doctoral program committee, the major professor or the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs is responsible for conducting the annual review. The Associate Dean for Graduate Programs is responsible for submitting the annual reviews to the Graduate School by the end of each academic year.

Program of Study

The requirements for the Program of Study are outlined in the Graduate School Manual, Section 7.43. The summary below provides a brief overview of the Program of Study process and is intended as practical guidance. Always refer to the Graduate School Manual for the complete and authoritative requirements.

The Program of Study is the formal plan of coursework that a doctoral student will complete to meet the requirements of the PhD degree. The student develops the Program of Study in consultation with their major professor. It should reflect the student's academic preparation, research interests, and individual needs while meeting all CON and Graduate School requirements.

Submission Timeline

Students should submit their Program of Study **as soon as practicable** after selecting a major professor.

The Graduate School requires submission no later than:

- **End of the third semester** for students enrolled full-time.
- **End of the fourth semester** for students enrolled part-time.

Failure to submit the Program of Study within the required timeframe may result in an **enrollment block or suspension of graduate study** until the Program of Study is submitted.

Approval and Changes

The Program of Study requires signatures from the **student, major professor, and CON Associate Dean for Graduate Programs** and must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School for approval. **The form for the Program of Study can be found here.**

Changes to an approved Program of Study may be made when needed. Students must submit a revised Program of Study with the required signatures for approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.

PhD Milestones

The Qualifying Examination

The requirements for the qualifying examination are outlined in the Graduate School Manual, Section 7.55.2. The policy states that a student who has earned a master's degree in the same or a closely related field before admission to a doctoral program does not usually take a qualifying examination, although the department may recommend that one be required.

Based on a vote of the CON faculty in 2025, the CON **does not currently require a qualifying examination for PhD students** who enter the program with a master's degree in the same or a closely related field.

The Comprehensive Examination

The requirements for the Comprehensive Examination are outlined in the Graduate School Manual, Section 7.57. The summary below provides a brief overview of the committee's role and is intended as practical guidance. Always refer to the Graduate School Manual for the complete and authoritative requirements.

All doctoral students must complete the comprehensive examination upon completion of the coursework specified in their Program of Study, and no later than 12 months thereafter. The comprehensive examination is designed to assess the student's intellectual capacity, scholarly development, and preparation to conduct independent doctoral research.

The comprehensive examination consists of two parts: 1) a written examination and 2) an oral examination.

Part I: Written Comprehensive Examination

The written comprehensive examination is prepared, administered, and evaluated by the **major professor in consultation with the doctoral committee**, including committee members from other departments as appropriate.

Timing: Within the CON, all students in a cohort will ordinarily complete the written examination at approximately the same time. The examination is typically scheduled shortly after the end of the student's final semester of coursework. The exact examination dates, instructions, and submission deadlines will be communicated to students in advance.

Format: The CON typically administers the written examination as a take-home examination. Students will receive specific instructions regarding the number and format of questions, expected length, examination period, submission requirements, and deadlines when the examination is assigned. The examination must meet the Graduate School requirement for a written examination of at least eight hours in duration.

Examination questions are developed by the major professor in consultation with the doctoral committee, and guidance from the PhD Committee. Examination content will not be released until the established examination start date.

Unless otherwise approved, written responses should follow APA Style, 7th edition. Students may seek assistance from the Graduate Writing & Presentation Center for writing structure or formatting, but not for the content or substance of their examination responses.

Students may not communicate with others about examination content or receive assistance of any kind during the examination, including assistance from artificial intelligence tools.

Evaluation and Grading: The written comprehensive examination is evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis. The doctoral program reviews the examination results and makes the final determination regarding whether the student has passed. Unanimous approval by all members of the doctoral committee is required for a passing outcome.

The student and the Dean of the Graduate School will be notified promptly of the examination results in accordance with Graduate School procedures.

Retake Policy: A student who fails the written comprehensive examination may be permitted one re-examination of the part or parts failed if recommended by the doctoral committee and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

If a re-examination is approved, at least two weeks must elapse before the student may retake the examination to allow for additional preparation. The second examination must occur within one year of the original examination.

Part II: Oral Comprehensive Examination

The oral comprehensive examination is conducted only after the student has successfully completed the written comprehensive examination and normally occurs within four weeks of successful completion of the full written examination.

Oral Examination Committee

The oral comprehensive examination committee consists of:

- The **doctoral program committee**.
- **One additional member of the Graduate Faculty**, nominated by the student in consultation with the major professor. The additional member must be from an **outside the CON**.

The major professor serves as chair of the oral comprehensive examination committee.

The additional committee member provides an independent perspective during the examination and serves as an impartial representative of the Graduate Faculty.

Scheduling and Format: The major professor, or if the major professor is unavailable, the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, or Dean of the Graduate School is responsible for scheduling the oral comprehensive examination in consultation with the student and committee members.

The major professor, or their proxy, must communicate the expected format and procedures for the oral examination to the student and committee members in writing when the examination is scheduled.

The oral examination may be conducted in person, virtually, or in a hybrid format. The format and location must be agreed upon by unanimous consent of the oral examination committee when the examination is scheduled.

The oral examination is limited to two hours, exclusive of committee deliberations. The full oral examination committee must be present for the duration of the examination, including the committee's deliberation and final vote.

Structure: The purpose of the oral exam is for the student to clarify areas that were not explicitly addressed in the written exam, and to utilize knowledge gained throughout the curriculum to advance the science.

Evaluation and Grading: The student will be notified orally of the examination outcome after the committee completes its deliberations. Unanimous approval by all members of the oral comprehensive examination committee is required for the student to pass.

The examination chair is responsible for reporting the results to the Dean of the Graduate School using the required form, with the appropriate signatures and acknowledgment.

Retake Policy: A student who fails the oral comprehensive examination may be permitted one re-examination if recommended by the examination committee and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

If a re-examination is approved, at least two weeks must elapse before the student may retake the examination to allow for additional preparation. The second examination must occur within one year of the original examination.

The Dissertation Proposal

The requirements for the dissertation proposal are outlined in the Graduate School Manual, Section 7.56. The summary below provides an overview of the CON's dissertation proposal process and is intended as practical guidance. Always refer to the Graduate School Manual and current Graduate School proposal instructions for the complete and authoritative requirements.

All doctoral students are required to develop and submit a dissertation proposal. The proposal describes the research problem to be investigated and provides a clear plan for how the research will be conducted and reported. The proposal process is intended to develop the student's ability to clearly articulate a significant research problem, justify the proposed approach, and demonstrate that the research is appropriate and feasible for doctoral-level scholarship.

College of Nursing Dissertation Proposal Requirements

The CON requires students to develop a comprehensive written dissertation proposal and orally defend the proposed research before their doctoral committee. Students may complete the dissertation using either the traditional five-chapter format or the three-manuscript format described in the Dissertation Formats section of this handbook.

Regardless of dissertation format, the proposal should provide a clear and detailed plan for the proposed dissertation research and establish the foundation for the studies that will comprise the dissertation.

For a **traditional five-chapter dissertation**, the written proposal generally includes:

1. **Introduction**, including the research problem, significance, purpose, and research questions or aims.
2. **Literature Review and Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**, provides a concise and relevant summary of what is known about the phenomena of interest and highlights the gap being explored/unique contribution of the study; as appropriate, may also include a discussion of theoretical and/or conceptual frameworks used to guide the study design
3. **Methods**, including the proposed research design, sample, measures, procedures, and analytic approach.

For a **three-manuscript dissertation**, the written proposal generally includes:

1. **Introduction**, including the overall research problem, significance, purpose, and research aims.
2. **A chapter for each proposed manuscript**, describing the proposed study and methodology through the point at which results would be reported.

The specific organization and content of the proposal should be determined in consultation with the student's major professor and doctoral committee. References and appendices should be included as appropriate.

Dissertation Proposal Oral Defense

Regardless of the dissertation format selected, the student must orally present and defend the dissertation proposal to the doctoral committee. The proposal defense provides the student with an opportunity to articulate the significance of the research problem, theoretical or conceptual foundation, research questions or aims, and proposed methodology. It also provides the doctoral committee with an opportunity to evaluate the proposed research and recommend revisions before the student begins substantial dissertation research.

The specific format and length of the presentation will be determined by the major professor and doctoral committee. The defense typically includes a presentation of the proposed research followed by questions and discussion with the committee.

Following the defense, the doctoral committee will determine whether the proposal is approved and whether revisions are required. Students may not begin dissertation data collection until the proposal has received the required approvals.

Graduate School Dissertation Proposal Requirements

In addition to the CON proposal and defense requirements, students must meet all University of Rhode Island Graduate School requirements for dissertation proposals. The specific requirements for the dissertation proposal are listed in the Graduate School document titled, ["Thesis/Dissertation: From Proposal to Defense"](#). The Graduate School **requires the dissertation proposal to be limited to the signature cover sheet plus 15 or fewer double-spaced, single-sided, numbered pages, using a font no smaller than 12-point**. References and appendices are not included in the 15-page limit.

The CON requires a comprehensive written proposal so the proposal approved by the student's doctoral committee will typically be longer than the Graduate School's 15-page limit. Students should therefore view the CON proposal as the comprehensive document and subsequently develop a concise Graduate School submission that accurately represents the approved proposal. Students should work closely with their major professor to ensure that the Graduate School submission accurately reflects the research approved by the doctoral committee and does not introduce substantive changes to the approved research plan.

Submission and Approval

The dissertation proposal should be submitted to the Graduate School before substantial dissertation research has been completed, typically during the first or second semester in which the student registers for dissertation research credits.

In all cases, the proposal must be submitted to the Graduate School during or before the student's seventh semester of doctoral enrollment and at least six months before the dissertation defense.

The Graduate School submission must include the **proposal and the Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Approval Form**, with the required signatures. The form can be found [here](#).

No dissertation data collection may begin until the dissertation proposal has been approved by the doctoral committee and all required University, CON, IRB/IACUC, and Graduate School approvals have been obtained.

IRB Approval

The requirements for research involving human participants are outlined in [Graduate School Manual Appendix D](#). The summary below provides a brief overview of the IRB requirements for doctoral students and is intended as practical guidance. Always refer to the current [Office of Research Integrity](#) requirements for the complete and authoritative procedures.

Any dissertation research involving human participants must receive the required **Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and approval before the research activity involving human participants begins**. No research involving human participants may be conducted without the appropriate University review and approval.

For doctoral students, the **major professor serves as the Principal Investigator (PI) of record** for the dissertation research and assumes responsibility for the quality of the IRB application and the responsible and ethical conduct of the research. The student develops the IRB application in collaboration with the major professor, with input from other members of the doctoral committee as appropriate.

IRB Application Process

Students should work with their major professor to determine whether the proposed dissertation research requires IRB review and, if so, the appropriate level of review.

The IRB application should be developed based on the **dissertation proposal approved by the doctoral committee**. The research conducted must remain consistent with the approved protocol and all conditions of IRB approval.

Relationship to the Dissertation Proposal

IRB approval and dissertation proposal approval are related but **distinct processes**. Approval of a dissertation proposal by the doctoral committee does not constitute IRB approval, and IRB approval does not constitute approval of the dissertation proposal by the Graduate School.

Students should plan sufficient time for both processes. For dissertation research involving human participants, the timeline should account for proposal development and committee review, IRB preparation and review, required revisions, participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. The **major professor and doctoral committee should be consulted before submitting the IRB application** to ensure that the proposed research is consistent with the approved dissertation plan.

Principal Investigator Responsibility

The major professor, as the PI of record, is responsible for oversight of the research and compliance with University and IRB requirements. Students conducting dissertation research are expected to work under the supervision of the PI and to follow the approved research protocol and all applicable requirements for the protection of human participants.

Students should not independently modify an approved protocol, begin new research activities, or expand recruitment or data collection beyond what has been approved without first consulting with the major professor and determining whether additional IRB review is required.

IRB Resources

Current information regarding IRB requirements, application procedures, review categories, forms, and submission instructions is available through the [URI Office of Research Integrity](#).

Students are responsible for reviewing the current University IRB requirements and following the procedures in effect at the time their research is submitted.

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training

The requirements for Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training are outlined in the [Graduate School Manual, Section 7.44.35](#). The summary below provides a brief overview of the RCR requirement and is intended as practical guidance. Always refer to the Graduate School Manual and the Office of Research Integrity for the complete and authoritative requirements.

RCR training is required for all doctoral students conducting dissertation research. The training prepares students to conduct research ethically and responsibly and addresses topics such as:

- Mentor and mentee responsibilities and relationships.
- Data ownership and management.
- Research misconduct.
- Responsible authorship and publication.
- Other principles of responsible research conduct.

Students may fulfill the RCR requirement through one of the options approved by the University:

- Complete the required online [CITI training](#).
- Complete an approved course that covers research ethics (*i.e.*, NUR 649).

- Attend and participate in three RCR seminars sponsored by the Office of Research Integrity.

Completion of the RCR requirement is verified by the Office of Research Integrity.

The RCR requirement must be completed before the dissertation proposal is submitted to the Graduate School. The Dissertation Proposal Approval Form requires students to document how the RCR requirement was fulfilled.

Although the formal deadline for RCR is submission of the dissertation proposal, students are encouraged to complete RCR training early in the doctoral program. Students may also be required to provide documentation of CITI Training prior to engaging in mentored research hours, depending on the scope of their activities.

Dissertation Research

The requirements for the dissertation are outlined in the [Graduate School Manual, Section 7.58](#) and [Section 11](#). The summary below provides a brief overview of the dissertation and defense process and is intended as practical guidance. Always refer to the Graduate School Manual for the complete and authoritative requirements.

Conducting Dissertation Research

Dissertation research is conducted under the supervision of the major professor and doctoral program committee and should follow the research plan approved through the dissertation proposal process.

Students should develop a realistic timeline for dissertation research in consultation with their major professor and committee. Proposal development, committee review, required approvals, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, dissertation writing, committee review, and the defense process can each require substantial time. Students planning dissertation research involving primary data collection should plan well in advance of the desired graduation date.

Preparing the Dissertation

The final dissertation is developed and written under the direct supervision of the major professor and often with input from other committee members.

The specific process for drafting and reviewing the dissertation is determined by the major professor in consultation with the student and doctoral committee. Students should expect to complete multiple drafts and revisions. Students are responsible for allowing sufficient time for committee review, revisions, final approval, and Graduate School submission.

Graduate School requirements for dissertation preparation, formatting, and submission are outlined in [Graduate School Manual, Sections 11.10 – 11.29](#) and the current Graduate School document, [Thesis/Dissertation: From Proposal to Defense](#).

Dissertation Formats

The CON permits doctoral students to complete the dissertation using either a Standard Format or a Manuscript Format, subject to current Graduate School and CON requirements.

Students should discuss the appropriate dissertation format with their major professor early in the dissertation process. The selected format should be established in consultation with the doctoral committee and should be consistent with the approved dissertation proposal.

Regardless of format, all dissertations must meet University standards for academic integrity, appropriate citation and attribution, and Graduate School formatting requirements.

A Microsoft Word template that uses the recommended formatting can be found [here](#).

Standard Format

The Standard Format generally presents the dissertation as a unified scholarly work organized into chapters. The specific organization may vary based on the research design, methodology, and guidance of the major professor and doctoral committee. A typical five-chapter dissertation includes:

Abstract

Chapter 1: Introduction / Statement of the Problem

- Statement of Problem
- Significance
- Purpose
- Definitions and assumptions
- Theoretical or conceptual foundation, as appropriate
- Aims, research questions and/or hypotheses

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

- Theoretical or conceptual framework, as appropriate
- Synthesized review of the literature
- Other relevant scholarly material

Chapter 3: Design and Methods

- Study design / methodology
- Positionality statement (qualitative and mixed methods)
- Setting and sampling
- Procedures
- Measures / Instruments
- Data Analysis Plan

Chapter 4: Results

- Sample/demographic description of participants (quant, qual, or mixed methods)
- Descriptive Statistics: (quant or mixed methods)
- Inferential Statistics: (quant or mixed methods)
- Identification of themes (qual or mixed methods)
- Participant Quotations: (qual or mixed methods)
- Identification of patterns or variation (qual or mixed methods)
- Tables and Figures

Chapter 5: Discussion

- Summary of Key Findings
- Interpretations of Data
- Implications
- Limitations
- Recommendations

Appendices, as appropriate, may include instruments, consent forms, letters of support, approvals, or other supporting materials.

The organization of the dissertation may be modified for qualitative, mixed-methods, or other research approaches as determined by the major professor and doctoral committee.

Manuscript Format

The CON also permits a manuscript-based dissertation. Students pursuing the manuscript format should consult with their major professor and doctoral committee regarding the proposed manuscripts, authorship, journal selection, and organization of the dissertation.

The manuscript dissertation must include the required introductory, methodological, and concluding material necessary to establish a coherent dissertation and demonstrate the significance and contribution of the overall body of work. The dissertation must also provide an appropriate literature review and theoretical or conceptual foundation, when applicable.

The dissertation manuscripts must represent a coherent program of research rather than a collection of unrelated publications.

The student must be the first author on dissertation manuscripts, unless an exception is approved in accordance with CON requirements. Committee members and other collaborators may be included as co-authors when they have made substantive contributions consistent with accepted standards for responsible authorship.

At least one manuscript must report findings from a data-based research study conducted by the student.

All manuscripts included in the dissertation must be approved by the doctoral committee. Manuscripts may be submitted for publication before the dissertation is completed when approved by the major professor and consistent with the student's dissertation plan.

Possible manuscript dissertation structures include, but are not limited to:

Example A

- Introductory chapter
- Manuscript 1: Literature review, concept analysis, or theory-focused paper
- Manuscript 2: Methods paper
- Manuscript 3: Data-based study
- Final chapter

Example B

- Introductory chapter

- Manuscript 1: Literature review or concept analysis
- Manuscript 2: Data-based study
- Manuscript 3: Data-based study
- Final chapter

Example C

- Introductory chapter
- Literature review
- Methods chapter
- Manuscript 1: Data-based study
- Manuscript 2: Data-based study
- Manuscript 3: Data-based study
- Final chapter

Example D

- Introductory chapter, including literature review
- Methods chapter
- Manuscript 1: Data-based study
- Manuscript 2: Data-based study
- Manuscript 3: Data-based study
- Final chapter

These are examples rather than required structures. The final organization should be determined by the student and doctoral committee based on the research program and applicable Graduate School and CON requirements.

Dissertation Defense

The requirements for the dissertation defense are outlined in the Graduate School Manual, Sections 7.58.1. The summary below provides practical guidance. Students should consult the current Graduate School requirements when scheduling and preparing for the defense.

The dissertation defense is an oral examination of no more than two hours, exclusive of committee deliberations. The defense is conducted by the dissertation defense committee and provides the student with an opportunity to present and defend the dissertation research.

The dissertation defense committee consists of the doctoral program committee and one additional member appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School. See [8.43.4](#) and [Section 11](#) on the committee and procedures.

The major professor serves as chair of the defense committee unless otherwise determined in accordance with Graduate School policy.

Scheduling the Dissertation Defense

Students should work with their major professor and dissertation committee to identify a proposed defense date and ensure that all committee members are available.

To set up the defense, the request to schedule an oral defense form ([found on the Graduate School website](#)) must be signed by the entire oral defense committee. The Graduate School requires **the request and defense materials to be submitted at least 20 calendar days before** the proposed defense date.

Students are responsible for distributing defensible copies of the dissertation to committee members according to the format and timeline established by the major professor and committee.

Students must be registered for the semester in which they defend their dissertation.

The Graduate School will provide the official confirmation and details of the scheduled defense once the scheduling process has been completed.

Format of the Dissertation Defense

The major professor must communicate the expected format of the oral defense to the student and committee members in writing before the request to schedule the defense is submitted.

The customary format is for the student and committee members to attend in person. A virtual, physical, or hybrid format may be used when approved in accordance with Graduate School requirements. The location and format must be agreed upon by unanimous consent of the defense committee when the defense is scheduled.

The dissertation defense is generally open to the University community and other interested observers. Observers may ask questions when recognized by the chair. The chair may ask some or all observers to leave if their presence interferes with the examination.

Outcome of the Dissertation Defense

A unanimous vote of approval is required for the student to pass the dissertation defense.

The student will be notified of the outcome after the committee completes its deliberations. The chair of the defense committee is responsible for submitting the required examination results to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Passing the oral defense does **not automatically mean that the dissertation is approved in its final form**. The dissertation must incorporate all corrections and revisions required by the defense committee before final approval.

After all requested revisions are complete, the formal dissertation signature page is signed by the **major professor and members of the doctoral program committee**. Additional members of the defense committee do not sign the formal dissertation signature page unless otherwise required by Graduate School policy.

For minor corrections, the major professor or chair of the defense committee is responsible for certifying that the required corrections have been completed. When substantial content revisions are required, the major professor and any committee members designated at the defense are responsible for confirming that the required changes have been made.

Re-Examination

A student who fails the dissertation defense may be permitted **one re-examination** if recommended by the committee and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

The committee must provide the student with written instructions identifying the deficiencies that must be addressed and any conditions that must be met before the second examination.

For the dissertation defense specifically, a second examination may occur only after a **minimum of ten weeks** has passed to allow for additional preparation. The second examination must occur **within one year** of the original examination.

Only one re-examination is permitted. If the student fails the second examination, the student is no longer eligible to complete the degree program in which they are enrolled.

Submitting the Final Dissertation

Following a successful defense and completion of all required revisions, the student must submit the final dissertation according to current Graduate School requirements. The final dissertation must meet all Graduate School requirements for formatting, pagination, margins, type size, and other submission specifications (see Graduate School web document titled 'Thesis/Dissertation: From Proposal to Defense' that can be found [here](#)).

The final dissertation is submitted electronically through the University's designated electronic thesis and dissertation submission system. Students should follow the current Graduate School checklist and submission instructions rather than relying on procedures from previous years.

The dissertation is not considered complete until all required revisions have been made, the required approvals and signatures have been obtained, and the final dissertation has been accepted by the Graduate School. The final dissertation must be accepted by a specific deadline based on whether one is aiming to graduate in May, August, or December (see [Graduate Student Academic Calendar](#)).

Academic Policies

All academic policies in the CON Graduate Program are consistent with those of the URI Graduate School. In some instances, the College has policies that are more stringent than the minimum requirements put forth by the Graduate School.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

The CON and its Graduate Programs adhere to the University of Rhode Island's standards for academic integrity. These expectations are outlined in the University Manual, Section 8.27, and the Graduate School Manual, Section A.13. The summary below highlights key expectations. Always refer to the current University Manual and Graduate School Manual for complete and authoritative requirements.

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work and to submit work that represents their own thoughts, effort, and scholarship.

Academic integrity violations include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating, including unauthorized assistance or communication during examinations.

- Plagiarism, including presenting another person's words, ideas, data, or work as one's own without appropriate citation.
- Unauthorized collaboration, including submitting jointly completed work when collaboration has not been permitted.
- Self-plagiarism, including submitting the same work for more than one course without prior approval.
- Fabrication or falsification, including inventing or altering data or research findings.
- Students must appropriately acknowledge all sources used in academic work, including material that is directly quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Any collaboration or assistance must be consistent with the instructor's expectations and clearly acknowledged when required. Students must also follow course-specific requirements regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

These standards apply to coursework, examinations, research, and other scholarly activities. Students conducting research are also responsible for following University requirements related to responsible conduct of research, data integrity, authorship, and human subjects protections.

Faculty have an explicit responsibility to address known cases of cheating or plagiarism. An instructor may assign a failing grade for an assignment in which academic misconduct occurred and must report the circumstances to the CON Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. More serious violations may result in additional sanctions, including failure in the course. Students may appeal academic integrity decisions according to the procedures outlined in the University Manual.

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to University academic integrity requirements throughout their graduate program.

Acceptable Use of Artificial Intelligence

We at the University of Rhode Island CON understand that generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Copilot) have become more integrated into academic and professional work, and present new opportunities for creativity, problem-solving and revision, and is a rapidly emerging and changing field. As an academic college focused on educating and preparing the next generation of nurse leaders who will transform wellbeing and environments, we want to ensure academic honesty, integrity and critical thinking are kept at the forefront for all our programs.

Unless explicitly allowed by a course instructor (e.g., listed in the course syllabus or required to complete specific course activities), **it is expected that students submit their own original work that has not been completed with the support of AI.** In our courses, AI tools can be used to help you in preparing notes, study guides, and to summarize important information. We highly encourage and recommend review of what is produced by the AI tool(s) you choose to use. It is important to ensure accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness for your intended purpose. Additionally, any use of AI tools should be documented and, when relevant, cited appropriately. This promotes transparency, maintains academic integrity, and allows others to understand how the tools contributed to your work.

If any assignments that are submitted for a grade, and said assignments are to be presented as your own, original work, and the use of AI tools is not clearly disclosed with which and how AI tools were used to the faculty member(s) and/or teaching assistant(s) of record for the course, this will be considered a violation of the University of Rhode Island's Academic Honesty and Academic Integrity policies. See both [Academic Requirements – University Manual](#) Chapter 8, Academic Regulations, sections 8.27.10 – 8.27.22 and the [University of Rhode Island Student-Handbook; Appendix I – Academic Misconduct](#), sub header “Academic Honesty” section for the University of Rhode Island's regulations and guidelines on these matters.

Formatting for Papers

The CON uses APA format for all formal course papers, written comprehensive examinations and dissertations unless otherwise instructed. Please refer to: APA (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, (7th ed.). APA.

Grades & Grading

Consistent with the University, the following grading system is used for graduate courses in the CON:

A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%

C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%
D	60-66%
F	below 60%

Academic Standing & Academic Review

The Graduate School awards graduate credit for courses in which a student earns a **C or C+**. However, the CON has additional academic standards for graduate students. Students who earn a grade below **B-** in a graduate course will undergo academic review within the CON. Students will also be subject to academic review if their **cumulative GPA falls below 3.00 (B)**.

Following academic review, the CON may determine that the student should:

- Continue in the program without special conditions;
- Repeat a course;
- Complete specified remediation;
- Continue under provisional status; or
- Be dismissed from the program.

In addition, a student who earns a **D, F, or U** in a course, or whose cumulative GPA falls below **3.00 (B)**, will have their graduate student status reviewed by the Dean of the Graduate School in

consultation with the CON Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and graduate faculty. This review may result in the student being placed on provisional status, suspended, or dismissed from the University.

Students should refer to **Graduate School Manual Appendix A** for University academic standing requirements and **Section A.26.1** for procedures related to graduate student academic appeals.

Grade of “Incomplete”

The requirements for incomplete grades are outlined in the **University Manual, Section 8.53.20–8.53.21**, and the **Graduate School Manual, Section 10.42**. The summary below provides a brief overview of the University’s requirements and the CON’s procedures. Always refer to the current University Manual and Graduate School Manual for the complete and authoritative requirements.

A graduate student may receive an **Incomplete (I)** when the student has been passing the course but is unable to complete the remaining coursework because of a documented illness or other circumstance that, in the instructor’s judgment, justifies an incomplete grade.

An incomplete is intended for situations in which a student has been making satisfactory progress, and an unexpected circumstance prevents completion of the course. It is **not** intended to provide additional time to improve a student’s performance in a course in which the student is not otherwise passing.

Resolving an Incomplete

The student is responsible for making satisfactory arrangements with the instructor to complete the outstanding coursework. The incomplete must be resolved and a grade change submitted **within one calendar year**.

If the incomplete is not resolved within one year, the **I** remains on the student’s permanent academic record, unless an extension is approved.

Extensions are granted only under **unusual and compelling circumstances** and when the student was passing the course at the time the incomplete was requested.

An extension may be approved by:

- The instructor, with approval from the CON Associate Dean for Graduate Programs; or
- If the instructor is unavailable, the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, with approval from the Dean of the Graduate School.

Documentation and Reporting

When an instructor assigns an Incomplete, the instructor must provide a **written explanation** documenting the reason for the incomplete and file a copy with the CON Associate Dean for Graduate Programs.

The student must work with the instructor to establish satisfactory arrangements for completing the outstanding work. Once the requirements have been completed, the new grade should be reported promptly to Enrollment Services and the appropriate CON administrator.

Because the CON does not have department chairs, the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs fulfill the department chair responsibilities identified in the University Manual for purposes of these procedures.

Grade Appeal Procedures

If a student thinks that a grade they received in a particular course is incorrect, the student has the right to appeal the grade in the following procedure. [**Note:** The student must commence the appeal process within 5 calendar days of the posting of the grade, and if the appeal is taken to steps 2, 3 or 4, the student must commence each next step within two calendar days after the conclusion of the prior step]:

- 1) The student shall first discuss the grade with the instructor.
- 2) If unresolved, the student shall discuss concerns with the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, who will discuss the matter with the Instructor.
- 3) If still unresolved, the student may submit a written appeal to the Associate Dean.
- 4) If the Associate Dean believes the grade should be changed, and the instructor does not agree to the change, the Associate Dean shall issue a written decision to the student and the instructor which includes his/her recommended grade change, and his/her reasons for recommending the change. If the Associate Dean does not believe the grade should be changed, he/she shall issue a written decision to the student and Instructor stating his/her conclusions and reasons.
- 5) If still unresolved, the student may make a second written appeal to a CON Graduate Scholastic Standing Committee by notifying the Associate Dean of the further appeal. The Associate Dean will convene an ad hoc Graduate Scholastic Standing Committee comprised of 3 to 5 PhD-prepared faculty with graduate status. The Committee will provide the Instructor the opportunity to respond to the appeal, following which, unless the Instructor voluntarily agrees to make a grade change acceptable to the student, the Committee will issue a final decision on the matter, stating its conclusions and reasons. If the Committee decides that the grade should be changed over the objection of the Instructor, the grade shall be changed in the manner specified in the University Manual.

University Withdrawal (Voluntary)

Students may withdraw from CON and URI at any time. Graduate students who wish to withdraw from the University and CON must notify the CON Graduate Program Office, complete the Withdrawal form found on the Enrollment Services website and forward it to the Dean of the Graduate School for his/her signature.

Leave of Absence (LOA)

Students who must leave the University for a period of one semester or more, whether due to military service, illness, childbirth, adoption, financial hardship or other circumstances, should apply for a Leave of Absence. The student should contact the CON Graduate Program Office first. If approved, the CON Associate Dean for Graduate Programs will sign off on the LOA form. The

formal request for LOA is then made by the student, in writing, to the Dean of the Graduate School, accompanied by the Leave of Absence form that has been endorsed by the CON Associate Dean. The written petition should be sufficiently specific so that the Dean of the Graduate School can determine whether the LOA is warranted. A LOA can be requested for one year or less. LOA requests must be submitted before the last day to add courses in the URI calendar (See GSM 4.30).

Continuous Enrollment

Graduate students must remain continuously enrolled in one or more graduate-level credits until all requirements are met and they have received their degrees. Please see Graduate School Manual Section 4.40 for information related to continuous registration (CRG 999) for 1 credit each semester, after all coursework and dissertation credits are completed, until graduation. CRG 999 may only be registered for when all other coursework has been completed.

Non-Matriculating Students

As is described in the Graduate School Manual Section 3.30, individuals holding a baccalaureate degree who are not students in a graduate degree program may take graduate level courses during the academic year or in the summer as non-matriculating students. Non-matriculating students who wish to enroll in a graduate course in the CON must obtain permission from the CON Graduate Program Office prior to enrolling. Non-matriculating students may take a maximum of two graduate-level courses in the CON without matriculating.

Notes: Non-matriculating students do not have the privileges regularly enjoyed by students in a degree program (see GSM Section 3.32). Non-matriculating students are not eligible for financial aid or assistantships. Enrollment in courses as a non-matriculating student does not imply acceptance or enrollment in any University graduate program.

Transfer Credit

PhD students who already have a master's degree may transfer in a maximum of 9 advanced standing credits to apply towards their degree, with the permission of the CON Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and the Dean of the Graduate School. These include credits taken as a non-matriculating student at URI or course credit being transferred in from another university. Please refer to Graduate School Manual Section 3.33. Any credits transferred in to apply towards the degree may not have been used to fulfill the requirements for another degree and must have been earned within the past seven years.

Conduct & Discipline

General Principles

Life in the academic community must be one of integrity, honesty, acceptance of responsibility, and a willingness to clearly and accurately represent oneself, one's work, and one's activities.

The CON believes that professional conduct is critical to the practice of nursing and fully supports the University policies and the ANA Code of Ethics presented in the [ANA Code of Ethics for](#)

[Nurses with Interpretive Statements](#) (ANA, 2025). Students are expected to observe the standards of professional conduct and ethics in all settings.

Students are expected to conduct themselves as representatives of the profession, the CON, and the University. Failure to meet these may make one subject to suspension or dismissal from the CON.

Professional conduct and civility are expected and always required. Bullying, threatening, yelling, verbal and/or physical assaults and other types of intimidating behavior will not be tolerated. Anyone exhibiting these types of behaviors may be subject to suspension or dismissal from the CON.

The commission of illegal or unprofessional actions is also prohibited, including but not limited to violations of HIPPA or privacy regulations, illegal drug sales, possession or use, chemical impairment, violation of other state or federal laws, and/or sexual assault or sexual harassment.

Involuntary Class Withdrawal

Breach of professionalism is a serious offense which will be dealt with firmly. The CON reserves the right to remove (involuntarily withdraw) a student from a course for a minimum of one day or up to the remainder of the semester in the event it is determined that a student's behavior or actions violate essential program or professional standards or requirements, threaten harm to self or others, and/or indicate that the student is not fit to continue. The student will be required to attend a mandatory meeting with the CON Associate Dean for Graduate Programs to discuss the incident or problematic behavior.

Non-Academic Suspension or Dismissal from a Program

In the event it is determined that a student's behavior or actions violate essential program or professional standards or requirements and/or indicate that the student is not fit to continue in the program, the CON may suspend or dismiss a student. The College will normally provide notification to the student of the reasons for the contemplated suspension or dismissal and give the student an opportunity to address those reasons before the College deliberates and makes a final decision to suspend or dismiss the student. The nature of the opportunity provided to the student (e.g., a less formal meeting with a College administrator, or a more formal hearing before multiple College officials or a panel, etc.) will depend on the nature and duration of the sanction and the reasons for the contemplated suspension or dismissal and other relevant factors. The College reserves the right to immediately suspend the student if the student's continuation in the program constitutes an imminent risk to the student or to other students in the program, or for other compelling reasons.

Community, Equity & Respect

Diversity and Inclusion

The CON embraces diversity and understands that each student brings unique experiences, strengths, and ideas to our classroom. These differences can be along dimensions of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, age, ability, religious or political beliefs, or other differences in lived experiences and/or ideologies. The

inclusion and valuing of these differences enrich learning and in and out of our classrooms. Each member of the University has the responsibility to foster an environment of inclusion, acceptance, mutual respect and understanding.

Anti-Bias Statement

At URI and the CON, we respect the rights and dignity of each individual and group. We reject prejudice and intolerance, and we work to understand differences. We believe that equity and inclusion are critical components for campus community members to thrive. If you are a target or a witness of a bias incident, you are encouraged to submit a report to the URI Bias Response Team at www.uri.edu/brt. There you will also find people and resources to help.

Accommodations for Qualified Students with Disabilities

Students are expected to notify faculty at the onset of the semester if any special considerations are required in the classroom or clinical setting. If any special considerations are required, it is expected that the student will notify the faculty with the appropriate paperwork from [Disability Services](#).

Health & Safety

Tobacco Policy

The CON is dedicated to maintaining a healthy work and learning environment. While the College already prohibits smoking inside its buildings and facilities, the CON policy prohibits smoking or use of tobacco products by students at any time when representing the CON.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

Violation of the University's drug and alcohol policies prohibiting illegal use or possession of any controlled substance without a prescription while enrolled in The CON is considered a serious offense and may result in suspension or dismissal.

Communication & Digital Conduct

Social Media Policy

Social media, such as X (formally Twitter), YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok etc. are to be used in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The purpose of this policy is to maintain the protection of sensitive and confidential information and to uphold professionalism.

CON students, faculty and staff must always protect individuals' rights to privacy and confidentiality and communicate sensitive and confidential information in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations and policies (including the policies of clinical training sites), including the requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) when applicable.

Violations of patient and/or student privacy will be subject to applicable HIPAA policies, procedures and sanctions, and may subject the student to other sanctions imposed by the College. Students who wrongly share confidential information, or otherwise engage in

unprofessional communication, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Nursing program.

Email Policy

All email communications to students by the College, or its faculty and staff, will be via the URI email system, with communications sent to the students' URI assigned email address. Students are also required to use their URI email account for all communications with college faculty or staff. Students are expected to obtain a URI email account as soon as possible and frequently monitor their URI email for announcements. Faculty and staff email addresses may be obtained by searching the [directory on URI's website](#).

Brightspace

The CON – Grad Student Resource Brightspace site serves as a communication portal between CON graduate students, faculty and administrators. Important information such as research opportunities, events, job postings, important dates, deadlines, and graduation information will be shared through this site. It is important that you become familiar with Brightspace and check the CON site frequently.

Campus Resources & Facilities

Printing Policy

Printing is made available to all nursing students at the Rhode Island Nursing Education Center (RINEC). The student printing station within the RINEC Second Floor URI Faculty suite uses [URI's pay for print system](#).

PhD Student Lounge and Workspace

The graduate student lounge is located on the second floor of the RINEC. Cubicles are available as PhD student workspace on the RINEC second floor immediately after the entrance to the URI faculty office area. In addition, offices 257 and 259 are set aside as "hotel space" for faculty who do not have offices in the RINEC. PhD students may use these offices on a space available basis, provided that faculty and Tas do not need them to meet privately with students.

Graduate Writing and Presenting Lab

The [URI Graduate Writing and Presenting Lab](#) provides writing support to all URI doctoral and master's students to foster continuing development of academic and professional writing skills necessary to succeed in graduate programs and academic or professional careers.

Importance of Surveys to the URI College of Nursing

Please note that surveys sent by the College of Nursing, Graduate School, Center for Career and Experiential Education, University of Rhode Island, or other URI entities, including surveys sent after program completion or graduation, are important sources of information for evaluating and improving the PhD program. The College of Nursing encourages all PhD students and graduates to complete these surveys when received.

Surveys individually and collectively provide information about students' and graduates' experiences, educational outcomes, career pathways, and professional development. This information is used to evaluate the PhD program, inform curriculum and program development, identify resources and supports for students, and demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of the program.

The University of Rhode Island is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). The College of Nursing's PhD program is included within the University's institutional accreditation. The PhD program is also guided by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) Research-Focused Doctoral Program in Nursing: Pathways to Excellence (AACN, 2022).

Why Your Survey Responses Matter

Your participation in surveys helps the College of Nursing:

- **Evaluate Program Quality:** Assess the effectiveness of the PhD curriculum, educational experiences, faculty support, and resources.
- **Improve the Student Experience:** Identify areas where students may benefit from additional resources, mentoring, professional development, or other forms of support.
- **Inform Curriculum Development:** Use student and graduate feedback to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement within the PhD curriculum.
- **Assess Student and Graduate Outcomes:** Understand graduates' career trajectories, scholarly accomplishments, research activities, and contributions to nursing science and education.
- **Support Program Assessment and Accreditation:** Provide evidence used in ongoing institutional and program assessment and in demonstrating alignment with expectations for research-focused doctoral education.
- **Strengthen the PhD Program:** Use feedback from current students and alumni to guide continuous improvement and ensure that the program remains responsive to the evolving needs of nursing scholars and the profession.

Your participation helps the College of Nursing understand what is working well and where improvements may be needed. Completing surveys when they are received contributes to the ongoing evaluation and development of the URI College of Nursing PhD program and helps ensure that decisions about the program are informed by the experiences and outcomes of its students and graduates.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Graduate Program Forms

Forms for the URI Graduate School are powered by Adobe.

A user guide and links to **all forms** can be accessed using this link:

<https://web.uri.edu/graduate-school/forms/>

CON specific forms can be found on the [CON PhD Student Resources Site](#) on Brightspace.

Other helpful student manuals and resources include:

- [URI Student Manual](#)
- [URI Graduate School Manual](#)
- [URI Graduate School Resources](#)

Appendix B: AACN Recommendations for Doctoral Programs in Nursing

[AACN \(2022\) The Research-Focused Doctoral Program in Nursing: Pathways to Excellence](#)