

WVU Board of Governors

**PROGRAM OF
EXCELLENCE**



**PhD in Nursing
Program Handbook
2023-2024**



West Virginia University

School of Nursing

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The [West Virginia University Graduate Catalog](#) is the official reference for all program information

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Handbook and Policy Disclaimer

Revisions of existing policy may be made at any time to correct misspellings, or for simple clarification of wording or expression. Changes that are substantive will go through an approval process.

The Handbook will be published online once a year, prior to the start of fall semester, incorporating any policies or language changed in the preceding 12 months.

Welcome from the Dean

We are excited to be involved with our colleagues in the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center in implementing a vision for health care in the 21st century, founded in WVU's history of excellence and service, with true social responsibility. We continue to be guided by our Vision: "West Virginia University School of Nursing envisions optimal health, enhanced quality of life, and excellent health care for the people of West Virginia and the global community." Nursing faculty and students are bringing nurses, nursing education and research, and advanced practice health care to serve the public in both urban and rural areas. The WVU School of Nursing remains committed to providing the highest levels of undergraduate professional nursing education, while expanding opportunities for graduate education. Our MSN program continues to prepare nurse practitioners for WV with faculty who are experts in using technology with "high touch" skills. We have approved a dual degree option for nurse executives to earn dual MSN/MBA degrees. Additionally, we offer two doctoral programs, the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) - the highest level of nursing practice, and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) - for nurses desiring a teaching and research career. Our programs are committed to building access with success throughout the state - regional campus support for undergraduates, online MSN and DNP programs, and a summer option for the PhD. I look forward to "meeting" you all - virtually or in person.

Dean Hulsey

Overview of WVU School of Nursing

The [West Virginia University School of Nursing](#) offers innovative baccalaureate through doctoral educational programs. Students are prepared at the WVU School of Nursing for the roles of skilled practitioner, educator, and researcher in a rich scholarly environment. These roles are aimed at facilitating learning, providing health services, and generating new knowledge to directly benefit the residents of West Virginia and advance the discipline of nursing.

[WVU School of Nursing research](#) focuses on improving health and reducing disparities among rural populations, in order to reach the overarching goal of improving the lives of West Virginians. It is consistent with the WVU Health Sciences Center strategic plan and the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute. The Office of Nursing Research at the WVU School of Nursing provides resources and support for the conduct and dissemination of research, including scholarly activities conducted by PhD students.

It is expected that the research conducted at the School of Nursing will be congruent with the [vision, mission, and values](#) of the WVU School of Nursing.

Vision

The West Virginia University School of Nursing envisions optimal health, enhanced quality of life, and excellent health care for the people of West Virginia and the global community.

Mission

The mission of the WVU School of Nursing is to lead in improving health in West Virginia and the broader society through excellence in student-centered educational programs, research and scholarship, the compassionate practice of nursing, and service to the public and the profession.

Values

At the West Virginia University School of Nursing, we are committed to the values of integrity, excellence, and inclusiveness. We want to create and foster a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect and inclusion. By embracing new ideas and broadening our perspectives, we will enhance our ability to address the diverse needs of the patients we serve. These values, together with vision, transparency and strategic leadership, enable us to create an organization in which teaching, learning, scholarship, service, and practice can flourish.

PhD Program Overview, Description, and Goals

The [PhD in Nursing Program](#) at WVU offers both part-time and full-time progression plans. The program is a hybrid program. Currently, Fall and Spring coursework is delivered online and the first summer courses are offered in a seminar style face to face format that requires a maximum of 6 days on campus for each course. Course times and days do vary throughout the program. After completing required coursework, students must complete a qualifying examination prior to advancing to dissertation phase. Once students defend a dissertation proposal, they advance to become doctoral candidates. Students then complete the research and dissertation phase, which culminates in a written and oral dissertation defense.

Program Description

The purpose of the PhD program is to educate nurse scholar-scientists for roles in research, teaching, and service. The program prepares graduates who will contribute to the body of nursing knowledge; educate the next generation; and assume collaborative leadership roles in shaping health policy, improving health, and reducing disparity.

Program Learning Outcomes

The expected learning outcomes of the program are that at the completion of the program, each graduate will be able to:

1. Rigorously test, generate, and extend knowledge to inform nursing science, practice and policy.
2. Contribute to the development of knowledge and interventions to address health disparity and promote or improve health.
3. Assume collaborative leadership roles in academia, healthcare organizations, research teams, and scholarly networks.
4. Demonstrate expertise within an area of study that incorporates nursing and transdisciplinary perspectives.

Requirements while Enrolled in Doctoral Study

The PhD program requires students to take **at a minimum**: 19 credits of core nursing core, 30 credits of research methods and research mentorship, and a minimum of 6 credits of cognate courses, comprising a total of **55 credits** of post-master's coursework. The PhD coursework provides content in scholarly processes, nursing science, and an area of concentration that supports the student's chosen area of research. Students work with faculty advisors to determine any additional coursework and experience that may be needed to support dissertation research.

Orientation

There is a mandatory online orientation program for doctoral students in the School of Nursing. Information will be emailed to the student's WVU mix email address about the online orientation session.

Maintenance of licensure as a registered nurse

All PhD students are required to maintain continuous RN licensure during enrollment in the PhD program. Annual renewal of RN licensure must be submitted to the Program Specialist. If the student's RN license lapses or becomes encumbered due to a disciplinary action, the student will be dismissed from the PhD program.

Student health insurance and responsibility for medical expenses

Students must have health insurance while they are enrolled in the WVU SON. Health insurance is available through the Student Health for students who are enrolled in 6 or more credits. Students who have private health insurance can apply for a waiver of insurance coverage through WVU. The [insurance waiver application](#) to show proof of insurance and opt-out of the WVU sponsored health insurance plan may be required.

CITI training in human subjects research

It is the student's responsibility to complete Citi-program Training and provide the certificate of completion for the basic course for responsible conduct of research to the PhD Program Director and program specialist **prior to the start of classes**. All PhD students are required to keep the CITI training certifications current for the duration of the program. Based on the type of research that the student engages in with faculty, additional Citi program training courses may be required for participation.

HIPPA requirements

All students are required to provide verification of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) training prior to collecting data in any clinical site or health record system. If you have not had HIPAA training, you must complete the training prior to the first week of nursing classes (training is offered to students in the HSC programs free of cost; information about how to access the course will be provided in the admission letter). All students enrolled in the WVU SON Graduate Program are required to provide verification or complete training on HIPPA to the Program Specialist.

Advising and Course Registration

The PhD Program Director will serve as academic faculty advisor to all new students for their first year and/or until a dissertation chair is identified. Program specialist works with program director as advisor to facilitate maintenance of student's academic records, and compliance with Health Sciences Center graduate office in West Virginia University regulations for progression and graduation. The program director will complete yearly evaluations of student progression.

Registering for Courses

To maintain active status, graduate students must register every term during which coursework is required in the progression plan (summer, fall, and spring). Students receiving financial aid from the University or other agencies, international students with certain types of visas, and students who wish to use these various university services and facilities may have specific registration requirements. These students are responsible for obtaining information about such requirements from the appropriate offices. The PhD program maintains a SOLE site that shares information about scholarship and research funding opportunities for PhD students.

Expectations for Advisor Meetings

All graduate students enrolled in at least one credit hour during the academic year must be provided with a written evaluation from their program following the end of each spring term. This requirement may be waived for students in good standing who are expected to graduate in spring or summer.

Selection of a Dissertation Chair

The Dissertation Chair serves as a member of the Qualifying Examination Committee and therefore, must be chosen prior to the qualifying examination. During the second semester of the second year, the student and PhD Program Director work together to identify a dissertation chair, who then assumes the role of academic advisor. To be a dissertation chair, a faculty member must be a Regular member of the Graduate Faculty. A current list of graduate faculty is maintained and should be reviewed for member status prior to selection of dissertation chair and committee members.

Doctoral Degree Requirements

The doctorate is a research degree and does not depend solely on the accumulation of credit hours. The requirements of the degree are admission to candidacy, residency, completion of the program of doctoral study (plan of study), and completion and defense of a dissertation.

Program of Doctoral Study

The program of doctoral study ("plan of study") is planned with the student's graduate advisor and committee to combine any or all of the following: graduate courses of instruction, special seminars, independent study, supervised research, and supervised training designed to promote a broad and systematic knowledge of the major field and to prepare the student to complete the requirements for admission to candidacy and to successfully complete the dissertation.

Required coursework for degree completion

All students in the PhD Program will take required nursing courses as stated in Table 1 *unless* they have worked with the Program Director and Program specialist to transfer in previously accomplished equivalent coursework. Credits for all courses in the list of required courses will be accounted for in each student's individualized plan of study and in Degree Works at the WVU Office of the University Registrar.

Table 1. PhD Program of Study	
Nursing Core	Credits
NSG 727: Contemporary Nursing Science	3
NSG 728: Nursing Science Theory/Philosophy	4
NSG 732: Seminar in Nursing Scholarship	3
NSG 735: Principles: Nursing Education	3
NSG 736: Advanced Health Policy and Ethics	3
NSG 737: Leadership	3
Research Core	
NSG 724: Health Research Statistics 1	3
NSG 725: Health Research Statistics 2	3
NSG 729: Quantitative Research Methods	3
NSG 731: Qualitative Research Methods	3
NSG 733: Research Grant Development	3
NSG 734: Use of Data	3
NSG 781: Research Mentorship	1
NSG 783: Dissertation Seminar	2
NSG 785: Qualifying Examination	1
NSG 797: Dissertation Research	8
Cognates*	6
Total Credits	55

*Cognates are “electives with a purpose” that are chosen in consultation with the student advisor and are designed to enhance the depth of understanding in the focus area of the student’s program of scholarly inquiry, or support the career and professional goals of the student. Cognates might support in depth study of a subject area of research, research methodology, or a particular professional role the student may seek, such as leadership or education.

Course Description and Information

NSG 724. **Health Research Statistics 1.** 3 Hrs. This course provides development of statistical knowledge and skills needed for quantitative health research. Topics include descriptive statistics, probability, hypothesis testing, analysis of variance, chi-square testing, linear regression, and logistic regression.

NSG 725. **Health Research Statistics 2.** 3 Hrs. This course continues the development of statistical knowledge and skills needed for quantitative health research using SPSS, including nonparametric testing, advanced regression topics and diagnostics, ANCOVA, SPSS syntax, classification, and factor, survival, and power analyses.

NSG 727. **Contemporary Nursing Science.** 3 Hrs. Focus is on an analysis of the state of the science for a phenomenon for study. Emphasis is placed on the application of the particular phenomenon to a population of interest.

- NSG 728. **Nursing Science Theory/Philosophy.** 4 Hrs. This course builds on the philosophical basis of nursing. Discovery and verification of scientific knowledge are addressed by focusing on theory development. Methodologies include concept analysis and evaluation of middle range theories of nursing and related sciences.
- NSG 729. **Quantitative Research Methods.** 3 Hrs. (PR: NSG 724 and NSG 725). Quantitative methods and measurement relevant to conducting research in nursing are studied.
- NSG 731. **Qualitative Research Methods.** 3 Hrs. (PR: NSG 728). An exploration of the philosophical foundations and methods of qualitative inquiry. Research designs, ethical issues, rigor, integrity, data collection, interpretation, and representation are studied in depth.
- NSG 732. **Seminar in Nursing Scholarship.** 3 Hrs. Exploration of the dimensions of scholarship in preparation for future roles as nurse scholars/scientists.
- NSG 733. **Research Grant Development.** 3 Hrs. (PR: NSG 729 and NSG 731) Analysis of the grant-writing process, including project goals and objectives, description, methodology, design, personnel, budget, and evaluation. In addition, current federal application formats will provide students with the background to complete a submittable grant proposal in their own area of research.
- NSG 734. **Use of Data.** 3 Hrs. (PR: NSG 724, NSG 725, NSG 729). This course focuses on the use of the following data bases: clinical, financial, health services, nursing, local, state and national. The uses of existing data in clinical and policy decisions and in research will be explored.
- NSG 735. **Principles: Nursing Education.** 3 Hrs. This course examines the research base of educational strategies in nursing education in classroom and clinical settings. The course also examines external determinants on nursing curriculum, accreditation issues, and evaluation of nursing programs.
- NSG 736. **Advanced Health Policy and Ethics.** 3 Hrs. (PR: NSG 732). Examination of ethical issues of research and current health policy.
- NSG 737. **Leadership.** 3 Hrs. (PR: NSG 732) Through exploration of contemporary leadership theory and application to self, an authentic personal leadership style will be developed to enable the student to enact a leadership role in health care and/or education.
- NSG 781. **Research Mentorship.** 1 Hr. In this guided practicum, the student's research skills are developed and cultivated through participation in the mentorship process with an experienced researcher (the chairperson or his/her designee).
- NSG 783. **Dissertation Seminar.** 2 Hr. (PR: NSG 785) This seminar provides an opportunity for continued knowledge synthesis related to the selected topic of research. Students will participate in proposal presentation and critique.

NSG 785. **Qualifying Exam.** 1 Hr. PR: Students must complete all courses except one cognate and NSG 781 and submit a first-authored manuscript relevant to the student's focused area of research to a peer-reviewed journal for publication prior to taking NSG 785. The Qualifying Exam (QE) allows students to demonstrate the ability to synthesize knowledge gained in coursework in order to be able to progress to dissertation. It is comprised of written and oral components. All elements of the QE must be successfully completed no later than the first semester of the fifth year.

NSG 795. **Independent Study.** 1-9 Hrs. Faculty supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

NSG 797. **Research.** 1-9 Hrs. (PR: Consent) Research activities leading to thesis, problem report, research paper, or equivalent scholarly project, or a dissertation. (Grading will be S/U.).

Prerequisites

All prerequisites from preceding semesters must be completed prior to registration for new courses unless a student has obtained permission from the PhD Program Director and the course instructor.

Timeliness of course completions

Courses are only applicable for graduation credit if they have been taken within the last eight years.

Syllabi for NSG 795 and NSG 797

A syllabus and specific course learning outcomes will be developed each time an independent study course (NSG 795) and/or a research course (NSG 797) is taken with the chair or faculty member.

Application of transfer of graduate credit to West Virginia University

Graduate courses may be transferred to the WVU School of Nursing from accredited institutions. In consultation with the academic advisor, the PhD Program Director will evaluate all requests to transfer a graduate course and will make the final determination about whether the course meets the requirements of the PhD program. A maximum of 12 transfer credits may be counted toward the degree. Cognate courses not taken at WVU must be taken at nationally accredited nursing program and must be graduate level. The student must obtain the signature of the PhD Program Director on the Application for the Graduate Credit Transfer Form *prior to* registering for the cognate. Upon completion of the course, the student is responsible for having an official transcript sent to the Office of Admissions and Records. Letters of good standing are required for anyone that has taken courses in another graduate program without completing the degree

Grade information

Grades are calculated to two decimal places (hundredths), and are rounded at the 0.5 level. Rounding will occur on final grades only and not on individual assignments or in grading categories. The following grading scale illustrates incorporation of rounding procedures. Percentage ranges are strictly enforced, and no additional rounding will occur: A= 92.50-100, B=84.50-92.49, C=76.50-84.49, F= 76.49 and below.

Grade criteria for progression. Achieve an overall academic GPA of 3.0 in all course work and maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA. The following guidelines apply to all grades in the PhD Program:

Grades of C. Students may carry forward one C grade in any course. However, a second C will result in dismissal from the program.

Grades of F. Students with a grade of F in any course will be dismissed from the program.

Withdrawals. Students can only have one “W” (class withdraw) while in the PhD program.

Unsatisfactory Grade. If students earn an unsatisfactory or “U” in NSG 797 Research, the chair and student must devise a plan to rectify deficiencies in the next semester. If another “U” is received, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Incomplete Grades. The PhD program follows the West Virginia University Policy for grades of Incomplete (I).

The policy states that a grade of I (Incomplete) is a temporary grade assignment used when unforeseen, non-academic circumstances arise that prohibit students from completing the last course assignments or examinations at the end of the semester. The grade of Incomplete is typically assigned because of an excused absence from the final examination, or because assignments are unavoidably incomplete, as determined by the instructor. Generally, the student will have been active in the course up until the last day of the 13th week of classes and earned at least a D- to be eligible to request an incomplete.

An instructor may not assign a grade of I without the student’s agreement and an **Incomplete Contract**. If a student has not requested an Incomplete, or the request for an incomplete grade has been denied, the instructor should assign the grade earned in the course.

Within the Incomplete Contract, the instructor is required to indicate a grade earned for the course assuming no additional work will be completed. Should the signed contract not be fulfilled, the instructor must either submit a grade of F or the grade indicated in the contract.

If the student is unable to complete the work during the following term for non-academic reasons, the term of the contract may be extended with permission of the Dean. Additionally, the term of the contract can be extended if the instructor is not available for a portion of the course, for some legitimate reason, and the course cannot be completed within the original time frame.

An Incomplete grade not changed by the end of the next regular term, (fall and spring semesters) will be replaced with a grade of IF, and the class must be retaken to satisfy degree requirements as necessary. Under legitimate, extraordinary circumstances, with supporting documentation and the approval of the Dean, an instructor can submit a grade change for an IF within five years of when the course was taken.

All grades of I must either be resolved or replaced with an IF in order to graduate from West Virginia University.

Extra credit and bonus point policy. No bonus points or extra credit will be offered in nursing courses (courses with the prefix NSG). Bonus points are defined as any points (or percentages) added to the student's score that do not also add the same number of points (or percentages) to the total possible for the course. No academic points will be awarded for survey completion, research participation, or other non-academic, non-clinical activities.

Student participation in online courses. Students in online courses have the professional responsibility to devote their full attention to the class while it is in session, just as they would in a traditional classroom setting. Students may not attend an online class session while responsible for patient care in the workplace. If a student is permitted by an employer to participate in an online course during working hours, he or she must do so away from the clinical setting and only after being completely relieved from patient responsibilities. Students will not be permitted to make up course work or testing that is missed if called back to the workplace.

Integrity in research, scholarship, and education. The School of Nursing follows the WVU Campus Student Code including the ownership of ideas and protection of intellectual property. Students must consistently submit their own work, cite others when appropriate, acknowledge funding as appropriate, cite themselves as appropriate, and obtain written permission when using copyrighted materials.

Responsible conduct of research. PhD Students must adhere to all policies set forth by the WVU Office of Research Integrity & Compliance. According to these policies, students are required to obtain written approval from the IRB to conduct research with human subjects PRIOR TO conducting ANY research throughout the program, including pilot studies and course-related projects using human subject data. Advisors are responsible for facilitating this process. In addition, students are accountable for declaring conflicts of interest; respecting the culture and heritage of research subjects; honoring research subjects' confidentiality; and safeguarding and ensuring the accuracy of all research data.

Policies for authorship for presentations and publications. PhD students are accountable for their professional publications, presentations, and posters. As such, scholarly products must be based on sound scientific principles and conform to ethical best practice guidelines that include transparency on sources of funding, attribution of proper authorship, acknowledgement of mentorship, and limited redundancy in publications. The PhD program has adopted the ICJME Reporting and Authorship Guidelines for the conduct, reporting, editing, and publication of scholarly work in Medical Journals established by the ICJME in December 2019.

Progression Plans

Full-Time Progression Plan for PhD in Nursing Students

	Fall		Spring		Summer	
Year 1	NSG 724 Health Research Statistics 1 NSG 735 Principles: Nursing Education NSG 727 Contemporary Nursing Science	3 3 3	NSG 725 Health Research Statistics 2 NSG 732 Seminar in Nursing Scholarship Cognate	3 3 3	NSG 728 Nursing Science Theory/Philosophy NSG 729 Quantitative Research Methods	4 3
	Total Credits	9	Total Credits	9	Total Credits	7
Year 2	NSG 731 Qualitative Research Methods Cognate NSG 795 (if 9 hours needed)	3 3 3	NSG 737 Leadership NSG 734 Use of Data NSG 795 (if 9 hours needed)	3 3 3	NSG 733 Research Grant Development NSG 736 Advanced Health Policy and Ethics	3 3
	Total Credits	6	Total Credits	6	Total Credits	6
Year 3	NSG 785 Qualifying Exam	1	NSG 783 Dissertation Seminar NSG 781 Research Mentorship	2 1	NSG 797	1-8
	Total Credits	1	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	1-3

The PhD program requires students to take at a minimum: 19 credits of core nursing core, 22 credits of research methods and mentorship courses, 8 credits of dissertation research, and a minimum of 6 credits of cognate courses, comprising a total of **55** credits of post-master's coursework.

Part-Time Progression Plan for PhD in Nursing Students

	Fall		Spring		Summer	
Year 1	NSG 724 Health Research Statistics 1	3	NSG 725 Health Research Statistics 2	3	NSG 728 Nursing Science Theory/Philosophy	4
	NSG 727 Contemporary Nursing Science	3	NSG 732 Seminar in Nursing Scholarship	3	NSG 729 Quantitative Research Methods	3
	Total Credits	6	Total Credits	6	Total Credits	7
Year 2	NSG 731 Qualitative Research Methods	3	NSG 737 Leadership	3	NSG 736 Advanced Health Policy & Ethics	3
	NSG 735 Principles: Nursing Education	3	NSG 734 Use of Data	3	NSG 733 Research Grant Development	3
	Total Credits	6	Total Credits	6	Total Credits	6
Year 3	NSG 785 Qualifying Exam	1	NSG 783 Dissertation Seminar	2	NSG 797	1-3
	Cognate	3	NSG 781 Research Mentorship Cognate	3		
	Total Credits	4	Total Credits	6	Total Credits	1-3
Year 4	NSG 797	1-3	NSG 797	1-3	NSG 797	1-3
	Total Credits	1-3	Total Credits	1-3	Total Credits	1-3

The PhD program requires students to take at a minimum: 19 credits of core nursing core, 22 credits of research methods and mentorship courses, 8 credits of dissertation research, and a minimum of 6 credits of cognate courses, comprising a total of **55** credits of post-master's coursework.

Extended Part-Time Progression Plan for PhD in Nursing Students – Version A

	Fall		Spring		Summer	
Year 1	NSG 724 Health Research Statistics 1 NSG 727 Contemporary Nursing Science	3 3	NSG 725 Health Research Statistics 2 NSG 732 Seminar in Nursing Scholarship	3 3	NSG 728 Nursing Science Theory/Philosophy NSG 729 Quantitative Research Methods	4 3
	Total Credits	6	Total Credits	6	Total Credits	7
Year 2	NSG 731 Qualitative Research Methods	3	NSG 734 Use of Data	3	NSG 736 Advanced Health Policy & Ethics Cognate	3 3
	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	6
Year 3	NSG 735 Principles: Nursing Education	3	NSG 737 Leadership	3	NSG 733 Research Grant Development Cognate	3 3
	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	6
Year 4	NSG 785 Qualifying Exam	1	NSG 783 Dissertation Seminar NSG 781 Research Mentorship	2 1	NSG 797	1-3
	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3
Year 5	NSG 797	1-3	NSG 797	1-3	NSG 797	1-3
	Total Credits	1-3	Total Credits	1-3	Total Credits	1-3

The PhD program requires students to take at a minimum: 19 credits of core nursing core, 22 credits of research methods and mentorship courses, 8 credits of dissertation research, and a minimum of 6 credits of cognate courses, comprising a total of **55** credits of post-master’s coursework.

Extended Part-Time Progression Plan for PhD in Nursing Students – Version B

	Fall		Spring		Summer	
Year 1	NSG 724 Health Research Statistics 1	3	NSG 725 Health Research Statistics 2	3	NSG 728 Nursing Science Theory/Philosophy	4
	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	4
Year 2	NSG 727 Contemporary Nursing Science	3	NSG 732 Seminar in Nursing Scholarship	3	NSG 729 Quantitative Research Methods	3
	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3
Year 3	NSG 731 Qualitative Research Methods	3	NSG 737 Leadership	3	NSG 736 Advanced Health Policy & Ethics Cognate (summer 3 or summer 4)	3 3
	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3 or 6
Year 4	NSG 735 Principles: Nursing Education	3	NSG 734 Use of Data	3	NSG 733 Research Grant Development Cognate (summer 3 or summer 4)	3 3
	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3 or 6
Year 5	NSG 785 Qualifying Exam Cognate	1 3	NSG 783 Dissertation Seminar NSG 781 Research Mentorship	2 1	NSG 797	1-3
	Total Credits	4	Total Credits	3	Total Credits	3
Year 6	NSG 797	1-3	NSG 797	1-3	NSG 797	1-3
	Total Credits	1-3	Total Credits	1-3	Total Credits	1-3

The PhD program requires students to take at a minimum: 19 credits of core nursing core, 22 credits of research methods and mentorship courses, 8 credits of dissertation research, and a minimum of 6 credits of cognate courses, comprising a total of **55** credits of post-master's coursework.

Residency Requirement

The WVU School of Nursing adheres to the residency and graduation requirements of the University. West Virginia University has a residency policy for students in doctoral education. Meeting the requirements outlined in this policy is required for graduation. The WVU Residency Policy for doctoral students states: Doctoral education involves many learning experiences that take place outside the formal classroom setting. These involve observing and participating in activities conducted by the graduate faculty, using departmental and University libraries, attending lectures presented by visiting scholars, informally debating other students, and similar activities. To ensure that graduate students experience this kind of informal learning, doctoral programs at WVU generally require at least two semesters in residence on campus. However, an individual student or graduate committee may propose an alternative plan by which the student can gain equivalent educational experience. This plan must be submitted in writing, approved by the college or school dean or designee, and placed in the student's program file.

To meet WVU residency requirements, students are required to attend an academic offering for one day in the fall and one day in the spring. In addition, when students initially start the program, they will attend two, two-day in-person sessions on campus in the first summer session. The School of Nursing PhD program requires that each student submit a written plan for meeting the university residency requirements to both the Program Director and the Program Specialist. This plan must be related to the student's dissertation focus, cannot be a product of a previous course/funding program/grant. Failure to meet the University residency requirements can result in a delayed graduation until these requirements are met or dismissal from the PhD program if requirements are not met within the time limits of the University for Enrollment in the program.

Admission to Doctoral Candidacy

Admission to graduate study and enrollment in graduate courses do not imply acceptance of the student as a candidate for a doctoral degree. Admission to doctoral candidacy is accomplished only by satisfactorily passing a candidacy examination (the Qualifying Exam) and by meeting other requirements specified by the program.

Because the candidacy examination attests to the academic competence of the student and is the formal mechanism for admitting the student to candidacy, it cannot precede the conferring of the degree by more than 5 years.

Qualifying examination (QE) information. Successful completion of the QE is required prior to beginning the dissertation. The QE may be repeated one time. *All elements of the QE, both written and oral, must be successfully completed no later than the first semester of the fifth year.* If students pass the 5-year limit without successfully completing the QE, they will be removed from the PhD program and their status will be changed to non-degree at the university level. The examination is intended to determine whether the student has the academic competence to

undertake independent research in the discipline and to ensure that the student possesses a thorough grasp of the fields outlined in the plan of study

Eligibility for and completion of qualifying examination. The Qualifying Exam (QE)

allows students to demonstrate the ability to synthesize knowledge gained in coursework in order to be able to progress in dissertation. The QE is comprised of two parts, written and oral. The student is *eligible* to take the Qualifying Exam (QE) when two conditions are met. First, all courses, except **one** cognate and NSG 781 Research Mentorship, must be completed. Second, the student must have submitted a first-authored manuscript that is relevant to the student's focused area of research study to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.

Qualifying examination committee structure. The PhD Program Director will appoint

a three-member QE Committee for each student and designate the committee chair. One member of this committee will be the student's dissertation committee chair but that member cannot be the QE Committee Chair. The student's QE committee chair will apprise the student of the QE expectations and evaluation criteria. During the semester in which the QE will be taken, the student must register for one credit of NSG 785 Qualifying Exam with the QE Committee Chair. A three-week period during this semester (weeks 8-10) is designated for the written and oral components of the exam.

Written component of the QE. The written component is the first part of the QE. The

student writes a paper in response to questions provided by the QE Committee Chair. The written QE document provides evidence of the student's breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding gained during the program. It is expected that the paper be prepared in American Psychological Association (APA) format and be no more than 15 pages, double spaced. The page limit will be strictly adhered to and only required documents are to be posted as appendices.

Each QE committee member will review the exam and score the written exam separately. Within one week of receipt of the exam, the committee will meet to discuss the outcome. If the written exam scores meet the requirements to proceed to the oral examination, the student is notified. If the written exam scores do not meet the requirements, the student will be immediately notified by the QE Committee Chair and a time will be scheduled to meet with her/his dissertation chair and PhD Program Director to identify the next course of action. The student may repeat the written QE once within one year of the initial date of the QE. The student cannot progress to the oral exam until the written QE is successfully completed.

Oral component of the QE. The oral component of the QE requires that all QE

Committee members and the student are present for the examination. Committee members may attend in person, by phone, or by video conferencing. For the oral exam, members of the QE Committee will develop targeted questions to address knowledge expressed in the paper that need to be clarified, amplified, and/or verified in the oral examination. During the oral examination, the QE Committee members independently score responses to the predetermined questions and may ask additional questions as necessary. The oral examination is limited to 60

minutes. The committee meets immediately following the oral component, and the results of the QE are communicated immediately to the student. If a student does not pass the oral exam, he/she will be instructed to meet with his/her dissertation chair and PhD Program Director to identify the next course of action. Students who passed the written examination but not the oral examination may retake the oral exam within 6 months of the date of the original oral exam.

Scoring of the QE. When the QE is finished, the QE Committee Chair obtains signatures from the QE committee members and on the Doctoral Qualifying (Preliminary Examination) Form. The completed form must be submitted to the PhD Program Director for submission to the Health Sciences Office of Research and Graduate Education.

Dissertation Research

The Doctorate of Philosophy Degree is the highest academic degree awarded by a university and is a terminal research degree. It requires extended study and intense intellectual effort. Awardees master a specific subject matter completely and extend the body of knowledge of that subject.

The final product representing this body of knowledge is the dissertation. The dissertation must present the results of the doctoral candidate's individual investigation and must embody a definite contribution to knowledge.

Responsible conduct of research. PhD Students must adhere to all policies set forth by the WVU Office of Research Integrity & Compliance. According to these policies, students are required to obtain written approval from the IRB to conduct research with human subjects prior to conducting ANY research throughout the program, including pilot studies and course-related projects using human subject data. In addition, students are accountable for declaring conflicts of interest; respecting the culture and heritage of research subjects; honoring research subjects' confidentiality; and safeguarding and ensuring the accuracy of all research data.

To be able to conduct the research outlined in the defended proposal, the dissertation chair (PI) and the student (Co-I) must work together to write/submit a protocol to the WVU Institutional Review Board (IRB) via the WVU Quali Coeus dashboard system (kc.wvu.edu). It is the responsibility of the dissertation chair to be listed as principal investigator on the IRB protocol for a student dissertation and the dissertation chair must review the protocol prior to IRB submission.

In some cases, the student may be required to obtain additional written approval from specific clinical/research sites to be able to conduct human subject research. Once an IRB approval letter to conduct research has been obtained, the student can begin the dissertation research.

Selection of dissertation committee

Once the QE is passed, the student works with the dissertation chair to establish a dissertation committee that meets the criteria established by the WVU Health Sciences Center Office of Research and Graduate Education and complete the Dissertation Committee Approval form. Doctoral dissertation committees consist of no fewer than four members. At least one member of the committee must be from a department/program other than the one in which the student is seeking a degree. Programs may set their own standards for these “external” committee members. Qualified individuals from outside WVU are allowable, as long as the general requirements for committee membership are followed.

The chair of the dissertation committee must be a regular member of the graduate faculty and a current WVU faculty member at the time of the defense. Co-chairs of committees are allowed, but at least one of the co-chairs must be a regular member of the graduate faculty and at least one of the co-chairs must be a current WVU faculty member at the time of the defense. The committee may include a nonmember of the graduate faculty, and associate members of the graduate faculty, as long as there is no more than one nonmember, and the nonmember and associate members together do not constitute the majority of the committee (i.e., the majority of the committee must be regular members of the graduate faculty). No family member may serve on the graduate committee of his or her relative. Committee members who are not graduate faculty members are normally expected to hold the same or higher degree (or equivalent professional experience) as that sought by the student. All graduate thesis and dissertation committees are subject to the approval of the chair/director or designee of the department/program and the dean or designee of the college or school.

For the School of Nursing, three or more members must be regular members of graduate faculty from the School of Nursing at West Virginia University. The dissertation chair and a majority of members must be from nursing. All signed forms must be submitted to the PhD Program Director for student files and submission to the Health Science Office of Research and Graduation Education.

Change of dissertation chair and/or committee members

Should it be necessary to change a member of the dissertation committee, the student must complete the Change of Thesis/Dissertation Committee Membership form. Requirements for faculty substitutions are stipulated that the faculty substitute must be the same graduate faculty status or higher, and in the same expertise; or in the case of replacing the member from outside the program, the new member must also be from outside the program. The change of membership form must be signed by the dissertation chair, the PhD Program Director and a representative from the WVU Health Sciences Office of Research and Graduate Education.

Dissertation proposal defense and advancement to candidacy

The student, with the assistance of the chair and committee members, writes and orally defends a dissertation proposal. Once the defense is completed, the dissertation chair obtains signatures from the dissertation committee on the Doctoral Candidacy Examination form. This form is then submitted to the PhD Program Director and subsequently submitted to the Health Sciences Office of Research and Graduate Education.

The dissertation proposal defense is a 20-minute presentation of the student's proposed research followed by questions of clarification from the dissertation committee. In consultation with the dissertation committee, the student writes a dissertation proposal that adheres to APA format and contains the following components:

- Describes a problem of significance to nursing and health care.
- Clearly delineates measurable study aims.
- Clearly states feasibly research questions and/or hypotheses.
- Addresses the suitability of a theoretical/conceptual framework to the problem of significance, the study aims, and approach.
- Synthesizes relevant literature or state of the science supporting the study, including evaluation of the level of existing knowledge, identification of gaps, and rationale for the study.
- Selects a research design that fits the proposed research aims and hypotheses.
- Specifies the type of design, the advantages and limitations of the design, rationale for choice of design, and sampling methods appropriate to the design.
- Conceptually and operationally defines all study variables.
- Clearly articulates the procedures for data collection, including rationale, strengths, limitations, and logical progression.
- Specifically describes an appropriate analysis plan.
- Details the ethical considerations related to study implementation.
- Describes expected outcomes, including future clinical, educational, research, administrative, and policy implications (as appropriate).

The process of developing/reviewing the dissertation proposal by the dissertation committee is as follows:

Under the guidance of the dissertation chair and members of the dissertation committee, the student develops the written proposal. Many drafts are often required until a workable proposal is developed.

1. At least 2 weeks prior to the desired proposal defense date, the dissertation chair sends the written proposal to all dissertation committee members for review.
2. The dissertation committee chair coordinates a time for the oral dissertation proposal defense and communicates it to the student in committee members.
3. All dissertation committee members are to be present for the proposal defense. One committee member (but not the chair) may attend by audio or video conference but should be available electronically during the entire time of the proposal defense.

Immediately following the proposal defense, the committee meets privately to determine whether the student has passed the proposal defense and then immediately informs the student.

4. If the student passes the proposal defense with no revisions required or if the student fails the defense, the dissertation chair obtains signatures from the dissertation committee on the Doctoral Candidacy Examination Form and submits it to the PhD Program Director.
5. If the student passes the proposal defense but the proposal requires revisions, the dissertation committee has two options: 1) Sign the Doctoral Candidacy Examination Form that day and authorize the dissertation committee chair to oversee the revisions, or 2) Wait to sign the form and instruct the student to revise their written proposal and send the revised proposal to the entire committee for approval. Each committee member signs the Doctoral Candidacy Examination Form after individually approving the revisions.
6. Written notification of the completion of required revisions or, in the case of revisions requiring more than 30 days to complete, an action plan for the completion of the revisions must be provided to the PhD Program Director by the dissertation committee chair within 30 days of the proposal defense state.

Requirements for dissertation defense

It is a requirement of the university that dissertation defenses be announced on the university calendar. In addition, the student must:

1. Be within five years of advancing to candidacy.
2. Maintain active student enrollment status.
3. Completed all courses in the Study Plan.
4. Have met the requirements for residency.
5. Have produced one first-authored, peer-reviewed journal publication (published or in press) that is directly related to the student's area of research.
6. Have the dissertation defense date finalized two weeks prior to the defense to allow processing of paperwork through the WVU HSC Office of Research and Graduate Education.
7. Provide the following information two weeks prior to the defense state: Student full name including credentials, dissertation title, dissertation abstract, and list of committee members to the PhD program specialist for the production of the dissertation defense announcement flyer.
8. Complete the Request to Schedule Final Defense/Presentation Form (Shuttle Sheet) form two weeks prior to the defense state and submit the form to the PhD Program Specialist. All committee members must sign the shuttle sheet request form and it must be submitted to the PhD Program Director.
9. Two weeks prior to the defense, the dissertation chair/committee must have an approved dissertation draft.

Dissertation Defense, Submission, and Graduation

The oral dissertation defense is a public event to which the scholarly community is invited. All dissertation community members are to be present for the oral dissertation defense. One committee member (but not the chair) may attend by audio or videoconference but should be available electronically during the entire time of the defense. During the dissertation defense, the student presents the research to the dissertation committee and scholarly community and responds to questions. The defense is limited to the PhD candidate's research subject and relevant areas and should not exceed two hours.

Immediately after the defense, the candidate and the public are excused from the room, and the dissertation committee discusses whether the student has passed the dissertation defense. After the discussion, a vote is taken. To be recommended for the award of the doctoral degree, candidates must receive a vote with no more than one dissenting member of the total dissertation committee. The committee then informs the candidate of their result.

Electronic submission of dissertation

After successful completion of the dissertation defense, the student must complete Electronic Submission of Dissertation (ETD) to the West Virginia University Libraries. The ETD submission deadline each semester is strictly enforced by the WVU Office of Graduate Education. The dissertation chair is responsible for ensuring the inclusion of appropriate modifications and required revisions, if any, in the final version of the dissertation.

Applying for graduation

The student must complete the graduate application form located at Application for Graduation at the beginning of the semester in which he or she intends to defend the dissertation.

Appendix 1: Academic Integrity Statement

It is the desire of the WVU SON faculty to create and foster a positive learning environment that promotes professionalism, integrity, and mutual trust. Nursing students are expected to act with integrity and honesty in all didactic and clinical settings, regardless of the nature of the assignment or activity or percentage weight toward course grade. For example, the WVU SON places as high an expectation on academic integrity for assignments, quizzes and short discussion board writing submissions as it does for exams or end-of-semester papers. WVU defines academic dishonesty in its policy referenced above and includes any dishonest act during didactic or clinical activities that violates professional nursing standards. Such standards can be found in the American Nurses Association ([ANA Code of Ethics](#) (2015) and the [ANA Scope and Standards of Practice](#) (2015). All forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. The WVU SON follows the [WVU Policy on Student Academic Integrity](#).

It is important that instructors and students adhere to rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and on all assignments and coursework to maintain the integrity of the education provided and ensure the validity of student assessment. In addition, RN licensure and safe nursing practice require that students exhibit characteristics of good moral character, including honesty and integrity. Students are strongly encouraged to ask a faculty member or administrator if they are unsure if a practice would be considered academic dishonesty prior to engaging in that practice. Students and faculty are expected to model the highest professional standards and to report possible instances of academic dishonesty. Any questions about professional standards or policies may be directed to the instructor, program director, or Associate Dean of Curriculum.

Formal complaints of academic dishonesty shall be filed with the Director of Academic Integrity by any Authorized Reporter (typically the Instructor of Record). Complaints should be submitted to the Director of Academic Integrity within ten (10) academic days following the discovery of the alleged incident of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty sanctions may range from remedial/educational sanctions to university expulsion. The comprehensive Academic Integrity policy, process, and list of sanctions can be found in the [WVU Policy on Student Academic Integrity](#).

Appendix 2: General Information about the Student Appeals Process

Appeal Policies (Final Grades, Academic Penalties, and Academic Dishonesty Charges)

The primary purpose of the appeal procedure is to allow review of a penalty or sanction in cases in which a student believes that due process was not followed or that the penalty or sanction was imposed unfairly or inconsistently with regard to course requirements and policies, or with program and University standards and regulations. Students have the right to appeal a final grade, academic penalty, or charge of academic dishonesty that they believe reflects a capricious, arbitrary, or prejudiced academic evaluation or reflects discrimination based on race, gender, age, disability, veteran status, religion or creed, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Additional grounds for appeal may include unreasonable severity penalty, demonstrable prejudice in the decision-making process, a belief that the evidence does not support the finding of responsibility (in the case of academic dishonesty) or the choice of penalty, or additional evidence or new information that was not considered in determining the penalty.

If a student does not appeal an academic penalty or fails to follow the appeal procedures described below, the academic penalty will be upheld.

Appeal of a Final Grade

For WVU SON, the Level 1 appeal should be submitted through WVU email to the Associate Dean of Curriculum, and Level 2 appeals are submitted to the Dean. Please refer to the [WVU Policy for Appeal of a Final Grade](#) for more information.

Appeal of an Academic Penalty

Students may also appeal academic penalties other than a final grade, such as admissions decisions, program dismissals, academic notice, or progression policy penalties. This type of appeal is not used for academic dishonesty cases. Please refer to the [WVU Policy for Appeal of an Academic Penalty](#) for additional information. Level 3 appeals are submitted through WVU email to the graduate associate provost.

In the WVU SON, the Academic and Professional Standards Committee presides over the Level 1 appeal. The letter of appeal should be submitted through WVU email to the Associate Dean of Curriculum, who will forward the appeal to the committee chairperson. Level 2 appeals are submitted through WVU email to the Dean.

Appeal of a Charge and/or Penalty Based on Academic Dishonesty

A student who has been found responsible for violating the WVU Policy on Student Academic Integrity may initiate an appeal by submitting a written appeal following the instructions provided in the notice of outcome. The student must file an appeal within 10 academic days from the date the outcome letter is sent. If no appeal is submitted within that time frame, the sanction(s) will be applied, no appeal will be considered, and the matter will be concluded. The student's appeal must include the documentation and evidence forming the basis of their appeal, and must be based on one or more of the recognized grounds for appeal listed in the [WVU Policy on Student Academic Integrity](#). The student may appeal the finding of responsibility, the sanction(s), or both. The Office of Academic Integrity must provide all relevant documentation to the Provost upon their request. The Provost assesses the available evidence and makes a decision about the appeal based on that evidence. The sanction(s) under review may be upheld, lessened, or dismissed entirely, but not aggravated, by the Provost. The Provost communicates the decision in writing via WVU e-mail to the student and other individuals or committees that have been involved in the charge or appeal to that point. The Office of Academic Integrity retains all documentation related to the appeal for 5 years. Once the Provost has issued a decision, the matter is final and binding upon all involved.

Appeal of an Admission Decision

If an application for admission into a graduate program is denied, the applicant may request the reasons for refusal of admission by writing to the specific graduate program coordinator (see [Academics](#) page). Note that meeting the minimum requirements for admission into a graduate program does not ensure admission. An applicant may appeal to the graduate program coordinator for reconsideration if the applicant can document either factual errors in processing the application or that the decision was arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory in nature. Appeals must be submitted within 30 calendar days of the date of the admission denial. If the matter is not resolved satisfactorily within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the appeal by the graduate program coordinator, the applicant may appeal to the dean of the college or school. The decision of the dean, as the provost's designee, shall be rendered within 20 calendar days of the receipt of the appeal and is final. Please see [Graduate Admission Denial](#).

Appendix 3: Graduate Progression Policies

Student success and program completion are among the highest priorities. The following policies outline standards and procedures related to progression and graduation and describe options available when students determine that a change in intended progression is desired. The goal of these policies is to encourage progression, persistence, and completion while creating mechanisms for flexibility required to achieve that same goal.

Students must be continuously enrolled in School of Nursing programs in order to maintain active status. Summer term enrollment is only required if the student's program of study/progression plan is dependent on summer for an on-time graduation. If a student experiences extenuating circumstances and needs to interrupt enrollment in any way, the following policies should be reviewed carefully. If a student needs to withdraw from any courses or decides not to enroll for the next semester, the student must meet with the academic and faculty advisors.

Academic Standards for Progression

To progress in the graduate programs, a student must meet these academic standards. Failure to meet the criteria will result in dismissal from the program.

1. Grade Point Average (GPA) requirements:
Degree seeking graduate students are required to maintain a 3.0 program GPA. A student who falls below a 3.0 in program courses after nine or more credit hours are completed in the program will be placed on academic notice.
 - Full-time degree-seeking graduate students will have only one semester to bring up the GPA to the 3.0 requirement. Failure to raise the program GPA to 3.0 by the next enrolled semester will result in program dismissal.
 - Part-time graduate students will have two semesters to bring up the GPA to the 3.0 requirement. Failure to raise the program GPA to 3.0 by the next enrolled semester will result in program dismissal.
2. Post-graduate certificate seeking students are required to take fewer credits than those in the degree programs. Therefore, a GPA lower than 3.0 will not be grounds for probation or dismissal. However, a minimum GPA of 2.75 based on courses applied to a certificate is required for the award of a certificate.
3. Course grade requirements:
 - a. Students must earn A, B, C, Pass, or Satisfactory in all required courses.
 - b. A grade of F, Fail, or Unsatisfactory in any course results in program dismissal.
 - c. Students can only carry forward one C grade in a nursing course. A second C in any nursing course will result in program dismissal.
 - d. Students can only carry forward two course withdrawals (resulting in a "W" on the academic transcript). The withdrawals cannot occur in the same course more than one time.
 - e. (Nurse Anesthesia Students Only) A student earning below a B- grade in

any anesthesia specialty course must repeat the course. This means the student will fall out of progression with the current cohort and must wait until the course is offered in the next academic year. Students may repeat only one course and only one time.

4. Course age requirements:

Students are permitted to continue in a graduate nursing program for a maximum of 7 years following their term of admission to the programs or 5 years following PhD candidacy. A course completed more than 7 years prior to the term of degree or certificate completion will be reviewed by program administrators and the Associate Dean of Curriculum. The student may be required to validate current knowledge in the subject area, repeat the course(s), or complete competency evaluation. The University's time limit requirements must also be met.

http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/degree_regulations/#timeimitstext

Grading Scale

The grading scale for nursing as posted in each course syllabus is:

A = 93-100, B = 85-92, C = 77-84, F = 76 and below.

Grades are calculated to two decimal places (hundredths), and are rounded at the 0.5 level. Rounding will occur on final grades only and not on individual assignments or in grading categories. The following grading scale illustrates incorporation of rounding procedures. Percentage ranges are strictly enforced, and no additional rounding will occur.

A= 92.50-100, B=84.50-92.49, C=76.50-84.49, F= 76.49 and below.

Extra Credit and Bonus Point Policy

No bonus points or extra credit will be offered in nursing courses (courses with the prefix NSG). Bonus points are defined as any points (or percentages) added to the student's score that do not also add the same number of points (or percentages) to the total possible for the course. No academic points will be awarded for survey completion, research participation, or other non-academic, non-clinical activities.

Incomplete Grades

The grade of Incomplete (I) is a temporary grade assignment used when unforeseen, non-academic circumstances arise that prohibit students from completing the last course assignments or examinations at the end of the semester (for more detailed information and the formal policy: http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/advising_and_evaluation/#Incompletes). Students must remedy the Incomplete prior to the end of the add/drop period of the next semester to enroll in a course for which the Incomplete serves as a prerequisite, course in sequence, or repeatable course.

Graduation Requirements

It is essential that students meet with the academic and faculty advisors each semester to discuss

progression and graduation requirements. Students should also track progress in DegreeWorks. Students must complete all program and University requirements (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/degree_regulations/#graduationtext). Students in a degree program must be enrolled in classes in the semester in which they plan to graduate. Finishing an incomplete does not fulfill this requirement.

LOA Policy

Students may request a leave of absence (LOA) or a partial LOA for extenuating circumstances, such as family and parental leave, military duty, jury duty, or significant changes in health or financial status. The student is required to submit an LOA and Withdrawal Form with the rationale, requested time period, and revised progression plan to the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs (who consults with program administrators). Requests that include partial semesters and/or individual courses will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for timeframe implications. Additional documentation may be required to clarify the circumstances for the request. Students are encouraged to evaluate the [WVU Withdrawal Policies](#), the financial implications of the decision, the effects of the LOA on program progression and the 7-year time limit, and [International Student Policies](#) as applicable. While students may be permitted to request a partial LOA and withdrawal from individual courses, WVU policies regarding course refunds should be carefully considered.

An LOA is not equivalent to a withdrawal or a dismissal, and there are specific limitations. Students are not permitted to have more than one LOA, and each LOA is limited to one semester. If unforeseen circumstances prevent the student's return to a program following a one-semester LOA, the student may request a one-semester extension, which is only granted in extreme circumstances. Transcript Ws that are part of an approved LOA do not count against the student and are not subject to the Academic Standards for Progression policy.

If a student is on an approved LOA, it is the student's responsibility to notify the advisor to schedule classes for the semester following the LOA and to seek a review of the revised progression plan. If the LOA was due to a significant change in health status, the student may be required to provide documentation from a healthcare provider that he or she is able to return to the nursing program and perform all aspects of the student role.

If a student does not return to the program during the contracted semester, it will be considered a withdrawal and will require readmission to continue in the program (See Withdrawal Policy and Readmission Policy). Exceptions will be granted if required courses are not offered the semester in which the student is expected to return. Retrospective LOA requests will not be accepted.

Withdrawal Policy

A withdrawal is defined as withdrawing from the program or failing to enroll in any given semester of the progression plan (see summer exception above). Students who withdraw must submit the LOA and Withdrawal Form, meet with the program administrator, and complete the Exit Interview Survey. Students must follow this process to leave in good standing and to be eligible for readmission at a later date (See Readmission Policy). Withdrawals resulting in Ws on the transcript will be subject to the Academic Standards for Progression Policy.

Appendix 4: Graduate Provisional Admission policy-MSN, DNP and PhD

Provisional graduate admission may be offered to students when they have earned a baccalaureate, graduate, or professional degree from a regionally accredited college or university but do not meet the criteria for regular admission. Provisionally admitted graduate students may have *program-defined deficiencies* or an undergraduate or graduate scholastic record that shows promise but is below the required 3.0 for admission to the nursing program. Students will be considered for provisional admission on a case-by case basis depending upon space available and other qualifications.

Provisions of Admission

Degree seeking students admitted provisionally must meet all progression standards including achieving and maintaining at least a 3.0 nursing program GPA.

Post-graduate certificate seeking students must meet all progression standards, including maintaining an overall GPA of 2.75 that is required for the award of a certificate.

Provisional graduate students who fail to meet the provisions of admission or who fail to achieve the required grade point average will be dismissed from the program and reclassified as non-degree.

Reclassification of Graduate Students

Provisional graduate students may be reclassified as regular graduate student's if/when they meet the program requirements specified in the offer of admission and the WVU minimum grade point average of 2.75.

Academic records of full-time degree seeking students who are admitted provisionally will be reviewed no later than the end of the term in which the students complete 18 credit hours.

Students who have been provisionally admitted to a certificate program must be reclassified as regular admitted students no later than the semester in which they complete 50 percent of the total credits required for the certificate.

Appendix 5: LOA Policy

WVU SCHOOL OF NURSING
APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE or PROGRAM
WITHDRAWAL
For the BSN, MSN, Post-MSN, DNP, and PhD Programs

Name (Print): _____ Student
ID#: _____ Date: _____ WVU MIX Email
Address: _____ Present Program & Track(if
applicable): _____

Students should contact their program director and academic advisor regarding their intent to take a leave of absence or withdraw from the program. Please review the LOA and withdrawal policies located in the program handbook.

It is my desire to:

_____ Take a Leave of Absence (Please include rationale below and any relevant documentation)

LOA Start Semester & Date: _____

LOA Intended Semester & Date of Return: _____

*Please note: It is the student's responsibility to contact the Advisor, Track Coordinator, and Program Director by the following date prior to the term in which you plan to return:

July 1 to return in January; November 1 to return in May; February 1 to return in August

There is no guarantee that there will be a clinical placement available for you when you return. Decisions will be made based on space availability and availability of course or track offering.

Rationale for LOA Request:

SCHOOL OF NURSING USE ONLY

Program Director Signature: _____ Date: _____

Associate Dean Signature: _____ Date: _____ Accepted _____ Denied _____

Notifications Made To:

Course Professors _____

Academic Advisor _____

Track Coordinator _____

Associate Dean

Comments:

_____ Withdraw from the Program &

University** Effective Date: _____

Appendix 6: PhD Credential Documentation Policy

All West Virginia University School of Nursing (WVU SON) students must submit and verify approval of important documentation. For PhD students, required documentation must be sent to the graduate advisor, Ms. Brandy Toothman.

Requirements:

Graduate nursing students are required to maintain and document active unencumbered RN licensure. Students must immediately report any event or circumstance that could impact the status of continued RN licensure. Failure to do so or allowing a license or certification to expire would result in dismissal from the program.

The following documents are required for admission to the PhD program.

Documentation required as a condition for admission

- Proof of current RN licensure

Compliance requirements include any items that are due at the beginning of the semester and items that will become due prior to the end of the semester. Students must exhibit compliance prior to the beginning of each semester (August 1 for Fall, Jan. 1 for spring, May 1 for summer). Students noncompliant on the first day of classes each semester will only have the add/drop week to remedy documentation errors.

Requirements:

Graduate nursing students are required to maintain and document active unencumbered RN licensure. Students must immediately report any event or circumstance that could impact the status of continued RN licensure. Failure to do so or allowing a license or certification to expire would result in dismissal from the program.

The following documents are required annually in the PhD program.

- Proof of current RN licensure (prior to expiration)
- HIPAA training completion certificate (found in SOLE)
- Signed handbook signature page
- Documentation of Health Insurance

Non-compliance of this policy is considered a violation of WVU SON Professional Standards.

Per the WVU SON Professional Standards policy, students are to:

Comply with the policies and procedures of the WVU SON, course syllabi, the clinical agency, and the West Virginia RN Board (WVBON); See [Graduate Academic Penalties](#)

Students who are non-compliant with credentialing requirements will be prohibited from registering for courses in subsequent semesters until all requirements are met.

Appendix 7: Readmission Policy

Any student who has been dismissed from the West Virginia University School of Nursing or any other nursing program may be considered for readmission if the dismissal was academic and was followed by successful completion of an additional degree. Any student who has withdrawn from the WVU School of Nursing program may be considered for readmission. Students may apply for readmission in accordance with the following guidelines and criteria but must follow the standard admission procedures. Students must meet all original admission requirements.

- Students previously enrolled in a WVU nursing program must complete all exit procedures and forms during the semester of withdrawal to be eligible for readmission.
- Readmission to a WVU graduate nursing program will be considered one time only.
- Students unable to complete the program within 7 years of the original admission date (all graduate programs) and within 5 years of entry into candidacy (PhD program) will be required to restart the program if readmitted.
- Readmission is not guaranteed and is dependent upon space available, applicant qualifications, and academic discretion.
- Students may be required to repeat courses, revise the original progression plan, and/or validate clinical skills/knowledge obtained from previous courses.

Appendix 8: Social Media Policy

WVU is committed to free and open expression and supports its faculty, staff, and students in the use of social media to connect with each other and to accelerate teaching and learning. Social media is a powerful tool that carries with it many rewards, but with those rewards come personal and institutional risks. The University has developed these guidelines to assist the University community in the safe, legal, and effective use of blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Foursquare, and other social media outlets, and to protect users' personal and professional reputations and the institutional reputation of the University. Because technology evolves constantly, these Guidelines will be monitored and revised as deemed necessary.

[WVU Social Media Guidelines](#)

General Guidelines:

1. Use of social media must comply with all applicable University policies, guidelines, and regulations, including but not limited to: Board of Governors policies, Division of Human Resources policies, Administration and Finance policies, and University Relations and Information Technology Services standards and procedures.
2. All use of technology resources must comply with the Information Technology Services [Acceptable Use of Data and Technology Resources Policy](#).
3. Users must not post confidential information about West Virginia University, its faculty, staff, or students.
Faculty, employees, and students at the West Virginia University Robert C. Byrd HSC also must abide by the [HSC Information Technology Services Guidelines](#), which contain vital information relating to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). Violation/ Breach of HIPAA may result in immediate dismissal from the School of Nursing.

Content managers must follow all WCAG 2.0 and 508 Compliance recommendations including captioning of all videos with correct spelling and grammar as well as other accessibility guidelines including alt tags for graphics. If a video is not transcribed by another group, it should not be shared.

HSC ITS Social Networking Sites, Blogs, & Instant Messaging Policy

<https://intranet.hsc.wvu.edu/hsc-standards-policies-procedures-and-interim-hipaa-privacy-and-security-policies/social-networking-sites-reviewed-4-22-2019/use-of-social-networking-site-blogs-and-instant-messaging-policies/>

NCSBN

https://www.ncsbn.org/NCSBN_SocialMedia.pdf

<https://www.ncsbn.org/347.htm>

Electronic Device Policy

Cell phones, laptops, and any devices with ringtones or other audible notifications must be silenced when in the classroom, workshop, or clinical area. Students may not accept or access personal cell phone calls or text messaging in the direct patient care or simulation area. Students must adhere and will be subject to WVU SON and clinical institution policies regarding cell phone use and social media activity.

Appendix 9: SON Professional Standards Policy

All students of the University and, to the extent applicable, all student organizations are expected and required to obey federal, state, and local laws, to comply with the policies of the West Virginia University Board of Governors (WVU BOG), with institutional or campus rules and regulations, with directives issued by any University official, and to observe standards of conduct appropriate for an academic institution. Any alleged violation to the Campus Student Code will be reported to the [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

Students are expected to adhere to academic requirements and standards in all academic settings, such as classrooms, laboratories, and clinics, and during any activities that are part of academic requirements such as clinical and observational experiences. In addition, all students in the WVU SON are expected to uphold and demonstrate professional and personal moral standards as defined and described in the following documents:

- West Virginia Code and Legislative Rules; Section 30-7 and Title 19
- American Nurses Association Standards of Practice
- American Nurses Association Code for Professional Nurses
- American Nurses Association Code of Ethics

The WVU SON graduate student is expected to practice with responsibility and accountability as a professional nurse and professional nursing student. The ultimate goal of nursing practice is to promote health while preventing harm to others. The WVU SON believes that this goal will be attained if the student's daily nursing practice is guided by the Standards of Professional Practice. These standards reflect minimum acceptable professional conduct.

- The role of the professional nurse involves demonstrating attitudes, values, and behaviors consistent with professional nursing practice. Behavior in conflict with professional nursing practice is inconsistent with professionalism and will not be tolerated.
- Unprofessional behaviors consist of actions that do not demonstrate the minimum behaviors described as acceptable nursing practice. Incidents may be a single event or a pattern of behaviors. Professional Standards include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Maintain professional integrity,
 - ii. Practice within boundaries of the nursing student role,
 - iii. Comply with the policies and procedures of the WVU SON, course syllabi, the clinical agency, and the West Virginia RN Board (WVBON),
 - iv. Demonstrate behaviors consistent with expectations outlined by program outcomes and competencies.
 - v. Maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times.

The WVBON requires that the program report misdemeanors or felonies and that applicants for licensure undergo a criminal background check and provide an explanation of any criminal incident. Depending on the Board's action, applicants for licensure may be barred from taking the NCLEX-RN, disciplinary action may be applied, and/or the nursing license may be restricted. An active, unencumbered nursing license is required to remain in some WVU SON programs.

Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge, attitudes, professional values, personal qualities, and behaviors consistent with the nursing role. Therefore, there is tangible link between professional role and academic achievement. Students who violate WVU SON professional standards and/or policies outside the purview of the [Campus Student Code](#) may receive a penalty for failing to meet academic or professional requirements or standards, including but not limited to a final grade reduction or other penalties. See [Graduate Academic Penalties](#). Violations of WVU SON professional standards and/or policies unrelated to clinical experiences will be reviewed on an individual basis. Any violation that could potentially alter progression through immediate course failure, program dismissal, delay in graduation, or university suspension/expulsion will be referred to the [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) and the [WVU Student Conduct process](#)

A faculty member witnessing a violation that interferes with the ability to meet immediate classroom, clinical, or safety has the discretion to dismiss the student from the experience. In this instance, the program director must be notified that the student was dismissed and if SON personnel believe it is necessary to suspend student participation of certain activities until resolution has been completed and documented.

Appendix 10: Transfer of Course Work

For degree seeking students, twelve semester credits of course work with a grade of B or better may be transferred from institutions accredited at the graduate level with in consultation with the program administrator and permission of the Associate Dean of Curriculum.

Certificate seeking students, with approval from the certificate program, may transfer up to 6 of the required credits for a graduate certificate from a different institution or applied from another previous or concurrent WVU degree or certificate. Individual course credits may be applied to no more than two degrees, majors, or certificates. Courses applied to a certificate must have been completed no more than seven years prior to certificate conferral.

A student wishing to transfer credit from another institution must confer with his or her academic advisor and obtain a transfer of graduate credit form from the WVU Office of Student Services. This form requires the signature of the program administrator.

- The applicant must provide a letter of good standing from the program in which currently enrolled and/or any graduate program in which courses were taken but the program was not completed.
- The student should provide information about the course for transfer including the name of the institution with address and zip code, the course number and the name, and the course descriptions and syllabi as published by that institution, including the WVU course it replaces or the requirement it meets. Courses for transfer will be evaluated for equivalency by the program administrator and Associate Dean of Curriculum (or designee).
- The student must have an official transcript from all attended institutions sent to the Office of the University Registrar. Failure to submit an original transcript will result in nullification of the transfer of credit. If the Registrar already has an official transcript, additional copies are not required.
- Nursing courses that will be 7 years old or older at the time of projected graduation or candidacy (PhD) will not be accepted. Students may request an exemption from the 7-year time limit for core advanced practice pharmacology, pathophysiology, and assessment courses as long as the student has a current advanced practice certification and current work experience as an advanced practice nurse.

Appendix 11: WVU School of Nursing Drug and Alcohol Screening Policy

The WVU SON has an obligation to protect the public and its students while also respecting students' privacy rights. Drug screening policies at the academic program level must balance safety and privacy rights. This drug and alcohol screening policy applies to all WVU SON programs that incorporate a clinical component, direct patient care provision, and/or handling prescription medications. In addition, the SON and its students must follow clinical facility policies and requirements regarding drug and alcohol screening.

New program applicants with a positive drug screen will be ineligible for admission to the program and will forfeit their admission "seat." Please see the WVU SON Drug and Alcohol Screening Policy.

Drug & Alcohol Screening Policy

Prohibited Substances

Any student under the influence of drugs or alcohol during a clinical experience may pose serious safety and health risks, not only to themselves, but also to all those who work with them and to patients for whom they provide care. The unlawful possession, use, or sale of illegal drugs, prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, and/or alcohol poses an unacceptable risk for unsafe patient care. On-campus and off-campus incidents involving alcohol or prohibited substances will be referred to the [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) and may result in a violation pursuant to this policy.

Prohibited substances may include cannabinoids, anesthesia/anesthetics, phencyclidine (PCP), cocaine, amphetamines, benzodiazepines, barbiturates, propoxyphene, methadone, methaqualone, methamphetamine, buprenorphine, opiates, and opioids. Students may not be under the influence of alcohol while performing patient care duties or handling prescription medication, and possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages by individuals under the age of 21 is a violation of state liquor laws. Likewise, it is illegal for anyone to provide alcoholic beverages to persons under the age of 21.

Students who are prescribed any substance that may impair their alertness or cognition while enrolled in a nursing course with a clinical component must notify their instructor as soon as possible and prior to clinical experiences, medication administration, or patient care. Students are permitted to take prescribed medications that may affect urine drug screen results as long as the student is able to safely provide care.

Nurses are not prohibited from receiving a cannabis certification from a healthcare practitioner and possession of a valid identification card issued by the Bureau for Public Health within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources under 16A-1-1 simply by virtue of their profession; however, a cannabis certification is not considered a prescription, and consumption is not permitted while enrolled in the nursing program. Positive drug screens, regardless of certification status, will be sanctioned as outlined in this policy.

Routine Urine Drug Screening Requirements

Students enrolled in programs with clinical components are required to submit a urine drug screen during the month prior to matriculation and annually through PreCheck/Sentry MD (see the PreCheck/Sentry MD Documentation Policy). Students are required to comply with clinical facility policies, which may include random drug screening.

Reasonable Suspicion (“For Cause”) Screening

Students enrolled in courses with clinical components may be subject to additional blood alcohol testing or urine alcohol and drug screening if reasonable suspicion for screening is found (see **Appendix D**). Reasonable suspicion requires some level of objective information to believe that drugs or alcohol are involved. Reasonable suspicion of substance use may be considered in the presence of the following factors:

1. Direct observation of the student engaging in drug or alcohol related activity
2. Direct observation of the student demonstrating symptoms of being under the influence, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Slurred speech
 - b. Odor of alcohol on breath or person
 - c. Unsteady gait
 - d. Dilated pupils or bloodshot/glassy eyes
 - e. Disoriented or confused behavior
 - f. Observed behaviors indicative of hallucinations
 - g. Unexplained accident or injury
3. Documented pattern of erratic behavior or sudden change in demeanor
4. Conviction of an alcohol or drug related offense
5. Documented sudden change in performance, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness
 - b. Decline in academic performance, including missed deadlines
 - c. Work habits in the clinical environment, including increased errors
6. Specific and reliable information from a credible source

Following an incident that requires drug or alcohol testing, the student will be sent home via cab or rideshare (at the student’s expense) or a responsible individual. Under no circumstances will the student be allowed to drive home or return to class or clinical.

Urine Drug Screening Procedures

Students are responsible for the cost of all drug screening. Routine drug screens are purchased and documented through PreCheck/Sentry MD. Random and “for cause” drug screening can be documented through PreCheck/Sentry MD or a participating LabCorp facility. More information regarding drug screen locations can be obtained through the Office of Student Services.

Students may not be permitted to begin or return to the clinical rotation until drug screen results are available. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that drug testing is completed in a timely manner.

Positive Alcohol and Drug Screens

Any positive alcohol or drug screen may result in a violation of academic program policies and professionalism standards. Refusal of a blood alcohol, urine alcohol, or urine drug screen will be treated as a positive drug screen result and repeat specimen collection for a positive result is prohibited. Students are required to repeat urine screenings with a ‘negative dilute’ result within 48-72 hours.

If the student feels that a positive test result is an error, the specimen may be immediately retested by the contracted laboratory to determine whether an error existed. In the event that the retest is negative, the immediately prior positive result will be considered an error, and the initial positive test will not result in a violation.

On-campus and off-campus incidents involving alcohol or prohibited substances will be referred to the [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) and may result in a violation pursuant to this policy. Interim suspension measures or an immediate leave of absence may be necessary during the investigation and/or during follow-up treatment and support. Required documentation will be outlined in a formal outcome letter and will be maintained with the student’s academic program record.

The WVU SON recognizes that chemical dependency is an illness that can be treated. Assistance for students who are dependent on a chemical substance is available through WVU and [WV Restore](#), and any sanction regarding a violation of this policy will result in a WV Restore referral. If, through disciplinary proceedings and the resulting sanctions, the student is permitted to return to the academic program, full compliance with the recommendations of the counseling/support program will be required.

Under the University’s [Campus Student Code](#) and WV law, bystanders and those affected by drug or alcohol overdose may be safe from prosecution and may not face charges if they seek medical assistance in an emergency.

Appendix 12: West Virginia University School of Nursing PhD Handbook Signature Page

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to read and clarify my understanding of the contents of the WVU PhD in Nursing Student and Advisor Handbook and to access my WVU email account at least weekly while I am a student at WVU. The PhD Handbook is updated regularly, and emails are distributed regularly by the PhD Program Office. These documents represent formal means of communication between PhD students and the University/School of Nursing. Receiving information distributed to students through these mechanisms is the responsibility of the student.

I have received and read the 2023-2024 PhD in Nursing Student and Advisor Handbook.

Please sign, date, and submit to the PhD Program Director within the first week of courses.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____