



## Faculty of Nursing Graduate Program Doctoral Candidacy Requirements

The University of Calgary [Doctoral Candidacy Regulations](#) (“the Regulations”) govern the conduct of admission to candidacy at the University of Calgary. This document establishes program specific requirements associated with the conduct of admission to graduate candidacy under the *Regulations*.

### A. Statement of Purpose

Admission into Candidacy in the Faculty of Nursing Graduate Program: 1) requires that students have abilities to conceptualize, interpret, critique and synthesize comprehensive, substantive knowledge that derives from qualitative, quantitative and philosophical/theoretical sources and is relevant to the practice and discipline of nursing; and 2) ensures that they have a well---developed plan for their thesis research, a sound proposal with a well---developed research question and potential for the ability to pursue and complete original independent research at the doctoral level.

#### Milestones to Complete Candidacy:

Please refer to the accompanying *Faculty of Nursing Candidacy Examination Process Flowchart and Timelines* document (Appendix A). As per Faculty of Graduate Studies regulations, students must complete candidacy within 24---28 months of beginning their program (unless transferring from a Master’s program before the Master’s program is completed where they must have an approved proposal and complete the exam no later than 36 months). Students may complete their course work within a full calendar year and may proceed to Candidacy earlier than 24 months. Students in the Faculty of Nursing Graduate Program must complete the following milestones prior to beginning their dissertation research:

1. All course requirements as identified in the calendar
2. Thesis proposal approved by supervisory committee (recognizing changes may be made after successful completion of exams prior to submission for ethics approval)
3. Field of study (FoS) written candidacy examination
4. Field of study (FoS) oral candidacy examination

### Program/Course Requirements

The completion of required and occasionally additional course work supports students to meet the requirements for the doctoral program and will offer a solid foundation to prepare for candidacy and carry out their chosen research study. The courses offer students opportunities to become research--- intensive, gain core disciplinary knowledge and develop expertise within a substantive field for in which they will conduct original research. Central to the program are the six required courses taken usually during the first 18 ---20 months in program (students can complete the course work in 12 months):

- Nursing 705 --- Philosophy of Science in Nursing

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- Nursing 769 --- Contemporary Issues in Health Care
- Nursing 721 --- Advanced Quantitative Research Methods
- Nursing 783 --- Advanced Qualitative Research Methods
- Nursing 711 --- Doctoral thesis Seminar: Scholarship in Nursing
- Nursing 733 --- Doctoral thesis Seminar

Students may take additional course work in research methodologies, and/or multivariate statistics. Each student's program will emerge from a blend of diverse scholarly activities and required course work. All activities and course work is selected relative to the student's individual needs, preferences and overall program requirements.

### Thesis Proposal

At least two months prior to the FoS written candidacy exam the student must have completed a thesis proposal that has been approved by their supervisory committee. The supervisor will obtain the *Approval of Thesis Proposal Form* (Appendix B) and obtain signatures from supervisory committee members and have a copy placed on the students file to ensure that a copy is included for submission to the research ethics board. We encourage the students to begin work on their proposal during their course work. The student and supervisor will begin the process of writing the proposal and will identify a timeline for meeting regularly with the supervisor and supervisory committee to ensure the proposal is completed as per the appropriate time frame (by approximately 22 months) to meet the Faculty of Graduate Studies timelines for candidacy exams by 24---28 months (refer to *Faculty of Nursing Candidacy Examination Process Flowchart and Timelines* document Appendix A).

Normally the thesis proposal is presented as sections or chapters adapted for their dissertation or manuscript for a paper based thesis. It should be formatted in a scholarly format double--- spaced and be 6250---7500 words long (not including references, figures and tables). The student will submit drafts of the proposal to the supervisor first and then committee members for feedback until completion and sign off is given prior to the candidacy exam. The supervisory committee members will review (no mark is given) the thesis proposal based on the following elements:

1. Abstract
2. Study Problem
3. Rationale/Relevance of the Study
4. Literature Review
5. Specific Study Objectives
6. Research Methods
  1. Study design
  2. Participants
    - Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria Sampling
    - Recruitment plans
  3. Data Collection
    - Interviews/Observation/Other Data for qualitative proposal

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- Variables: outcomes, predictors, confounders (for Quantitative Proposal)
- Measures/Instruments (for Quantitative Proposal)
- Procedures (for Quantitative Proposal)
- 4. Data Analysis
- 5. Ethical
  - Considerations
  - Consent form
  - Privacy
  - Considerations
- 6. Limitations
- 7. Budget
- 8. Dissemination Plan

In keeping with the 20---22months timeline for completion, regular meetings between the student and supervisor will occur to ensure this timeline is met. Following the successful completion of FoS written and oral candidacy exams, students may or may not have alterations to make to the proposal suggested by their supervisory committee members, prior to the submission for ethical approval.

**Preparing for the FoS Written and Oral Candidacy Exams**

**Preparation Materials and Strategies**

Preparation for Candidacy should be viewed as an opportunity for focus and synthesis of learning obtained through course work, self---study and identification of a substantive area of interest in the program. The student and supervisor should outline the preparation that will occur at least 2 months prior to the FoS candidacy written and oral exam with input from the supervisory committee in writing, specifying how the student should prepare. Examples of preparatory materials may include: an agreed upon reading list/and or an annotated bibliography of about 20---30 articles that constitute key readings in the students declared substantive area; a portfolio of the student's work including the student's CV, scholarly research papers from the student's course work, published papers and abstracts. While there are no strict deadlines, this is normally completed in an 8 week period. These materials and the student's dissertation proposal presented to the supervisory committee will serve as a demonstration of progress and readiness to proceed to candidacy.

**Roles and responsibilities of Students, Supervisors and Supervisory Committee**

The student and supervisor will plan regular meetings for the student and supervisor and /or supervisory committee members to enable discussion of papers and/or other strategies deemed important for the students learning. It is the students' responsibility to assure that their portfolios are complete and also to articulate as part of their portfolio, their goals and priorities for their learning so that the committee members will have a solid overview of the student's area of focus during their doctoral program. All supervisory committee members are responsible for becoming familiar with the

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student's portfolio, and contributing to the draft questions (discussed below) that the supervisor and committee prepare for the written FoS exam.

### Meeting Processes and Timelines

Within the first year of the student's course---work, the student, supervisor and members of the supervisory committee will work together to become familiar with the student's topic/materials thereby acquiring an understanding of his/her work. The *supervisory committee* will meet at least on 2 occasions (the student and supervisor will meet on a regular basis as determined by the student and supervisor) leading up to Candidacy. At first meeting with the supervisory committee will be to assess the student's priorities and goals for his/her program. Regular meetings between the student and supervisor will help refine the student's goals and priorities related to his/her proposal development.

At a second meeting with the supervisory committee, the student may bring a suggested reading list beginning to indicate what specific literature or other knowledge sources will be helpful to solidify specific substantive areas and research methodology. Students and their supervisory committee will finalize a reading list approximately 20---30 readings (however, length and topic list will vary with each student) and make decisions about prioritizing the readings that are essential in helping students prepare for FoS candidacy written and oral examination. Formulating candidacy topics/questions for the FoS written exam are related to the core areas of substantive literature, theory/philosophy/methodology, and issues related to the student's proposal. The supervisor from the core readings and other materials from the students' portfolio would begin generating the written exam questions with consultation and support from the supervisory committee as needed. A faculty member new to supervising doctoral students may have the Associate Dean Graduate Programs review the FoS written exam questions prior to submission to the student.

Supervisors should prepare their students for the nature of the written and oral exam experience, as some students will find the format of an oral exam challenging. Students struggling with anxiety should consider contacting their supervisor and the Associate Dean Graduate Programs who may suggest student wellness (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>). Student Wellness not only has counselling services but also workshops on preparing for oral examinations. MyGradSkills (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/mygradskills/>) also offers programs related to presenting and communication skills. Finally, students are encouraged to organize practice oral examinations with senior students who have completed their candidacy requirements, in which they take turns presenting their work and practice answering questions from the audience. Supervisors in their discussions with students may also prepare students by asking related questions typical of those asked in a candidacy exam.

### Scheduling of the Examination

The Supervisor is responsible for initiating all arrangements related to the scheduling of the examination. The supervisor and student work together to complete the *Exam Timeframe Doctoral Field of Study Candidacy Form* (see Appendix C) at least 2 months in advance of the proposed exam date.

Once a mutually agreeable date has been set for the FoS oral candidacy exam, the supervisor works

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backwards 5 weeks to determine the date and time the student will receive their FoS written exam questions.

### **Format of the Field of Study (FoS) Written Candidacy Examination**

The Candidacy examination in the Faculty of Nursing involves both a written and oral component of the FoS exam. The doctoral student's written FoS candidacy exam must demonstrate the students' abilities to conceptualize and synthesize knowledge relevant to the discipline of nursing. It is intended to ensure that students have the background knowledge and the analytic abilities required to proceed into their focused area of independent research. The examination also provides for the opportunity to communicate their knowledge about their substantive area and the discipline of nursing. Students will respond in writing to three questions (composed by the supervisor in collaboration with supervisory committee) (written over 3 weeks) that will cover comprehensive knowledge of: 1) philosophy of science/methodology/theory; 2) the substantive knowledge / literature covered in the student's main field related to their research and topics germane to the research question; and 3) argumentation of an issue that stems from their proposal. These exam papers may be adapted for future dissertation chapters, or as publishable papers towards a *manuscript based thesis* as per the Faculty of Graduate Studies guidelines.

All FoS exam papers should adhere to the following guidelines: approximately 5000--6250 words in length (excluding references, tables and figures) and formatted in accordance with APA style. The FoS written examination is an *exam*, so contact related to discussing the exam materials should only occur between the student and supervisor *during the examination period*. Supervisors may connect with their students to ensure they have received and do not have questions prior to or during the exam (See Appendix D).

### **Process/Examination Committee Composition for the Field of Study (FoS) Written/Oral Candidacy Examination**

The examination committee composition for the Candidacy exam in the Faculty of Nursing (the same committee examines both the written and oral components) consists of the student's *supervisory committee* (normally, 3 members, of which 2 must be within the faculty of nursing). In addition, 2 other examining *committee* members will be added: one *new member* from the Faculty of Nursing and one *internal /external member* (*internal to the University of Calgary but external to the Faculty of Nursing*). The student will have 3 weeks to complete the FoS written papers and upon completion, at the agreed upon time as indicated on the *Doctoral Program Candidacy Examination Template* (see Appendix D), the papers will be emailed by the student to the Graduate Programs Administrator who will ensure that the papers are sent to the appropriate emails of all members of the full examination committee for review. Examiners have a 2--week to evaluate the papers individually (see Evaluation Criteria Appendix F) and are required to submit a written report (see Appendix G). The report will provide an overall assessment of the written work rather than an evaluation of each paper. The evaluation by each examiner will remain confidential until the oral exam deliberation. The oral exam will occur 2 weeks following the completion of the written exam.

### **Field of Study (FoS) Oral Candidacy Examination Format and Evaluation**

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The purpose of the oral FoS candidacy exam is an opportunity for students to articulate responses to questions posed by the examiners on each of the written papers. Examiners may ask questions regarding: 1) clarification of written answers, 2) expansion of written answers, and 3) defense of analyses/arguments presented in the written papers. A successful oral exam will demonstrate that the student has achieved both breadth and depth in the core areas noted above (philosophy of science/methodology/theory, substantive knowledge/literature related to the student's field and argumentation/justification of an issue related to their proposed research). *Depth* means that the student will demonstrate that they have specialized knowledge required to conduct high quality scholarship in their area (this means that they will have read and understood related literature well and be able to answer questions on how their research relates to that literature including: what they are proposing to contribute, why their research topic is important, what philosophy/methodology will support their research, and why it is important, and how they will plan to collect and analyze their data); *breadth* means that they will demonstrate that they have knowledge beyond their focused area and are able to demonstrate skills in thinking, presenting, developing an argument and critically synthesizing and analyzing information drawn from other worldviews/paradigms (see Appendix F).

### **Process/Evaluation of Field of Study (FoS) Oral Candidacy Examination**

Candidacy examinations in the Faculty of Nursing are always closed examinations. Only individuals listed on the *Notice of Candidacy Oral Examination* (Appendix E) are allowed to be present in the examination room. The Dean of Nursing, and the Associate Dean Graduate programs Faculty of Nursing may attend without prior notice. The oral exam will be a total of 2 hours in length (not including requested breaks and deliberation time of the committee) and will be chaired by a Neutral Chair appointed by the Associate Dean Graduate Programs at the time of the completion of the *Exam Timeframe Form* (Appendix C). The Neutral Chair is not a member of the examining committee and is non-voting. He/she must not have a direct relationship with the student or have read the student's FoS written work. The Neutral Chair presides over the candidacy examination to ensure a fair and just process is followed. The Neutral Chair takes notes during the exam of the process and questions asked by the examiners. The Neutral Chair is responsible for ensuring the final paperwork is signed off and given to the Graduate Programs Office within 24 hours of the exam.

The format of the oral exam will be as follows: the student will make a 10 minute presentation (included as part of the total 2 hour time frame of the exam) briefly introducing the background of their work and any opening comments they wish to make about their papers. Rounds of questions follow this on each specific paper individually from paper 1--3. The internal/external member of the committee begins the questioning, followed by the new examining committee member and then the remaining supervisory committee members (See Appendix C).

Examiners are encouraged to ask clear and succinct questions. The student will be given reasonable time to answer and should feel free to ask for questions to be repeated or rephrased. If a student is not able to answer, the Neutral Chair should direct the examiners to move to the next question rather than pressing, leading or interrogating the student. After each paper has been addressed, the Neutral Chair asks for an additional round of general questioning of any of the papers if time permits. Once questioning is complete, the student is asked to withdraw from the room for the committee deliberation.

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In the deliberation process of the examination, all members including the student's supervisor (except the neutral chair) are participating voting members. In this vote examiners are considering both the written work and the oral presentation/responses to questions separately. Before any discussion of the candidate's performance each member must identify, by *secret ballot*, which recommendation he/she favours (pass or fail for each of the written and the oral components of the exam, independently). This allows the committee an opening for full discussion of the student's performance. Following this discussion, each committee member will then vote again. Every effort should be made to reach a unanimous recommendation. Should the outcome of the final vote include one negative vote, the student will pass. Should the outcome include two or more negative votes, the committee's judgment to the Associate Dean Graduate Programs will be "fail". This result will immediately be provided to the student by the supervisor. After the final vote each examiner must record an evaluation of pass or fail on the *Report of Candidacy Oral Examination Form*, and be delivered to Graduate Programs office by the Neutral Chair.

Within 5 working days of a failed examination, the Neutral Chair and each examiner must submit a written report to the Associate Dean Graduate Programs providing reasons for his/her vote. The Associate Dean Graduate Programs then summarizes the essential points from the memos to the student, copied to the supervisor. The graduate program, within ten working days from the examination, will send a notice of failed candidacy to the student.

### **Appeal of Failed Field of Study (FoS) Candidacy Examination**

A student who fails any component of the FoS written or oral exam has the right to appeal (See University of Calgary Calendar 2015---16). Student must appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings p. 34).

A recommendation of "fail" requires that, within five working days:

- Each examiner must submit a confidential report to the Dean Faculty of Graduate Studies copied to the Associate Dean Graduate Programs, detailing the reasons for his/her vote.
- The Neutral Chair must also submit a written report of the examination procedures to the Dean Faculty of Graduate Studies, copied to the Associate Dean Graduate Programs.

### **Re---take of Examination**

Should the Dean Faculty of Graduate Studies uphold the recommendation of "fail", the student will be allowed *only one* re---take of the examination within 6 months of the failed examination. Normally, the same

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examination committee will be involved in the re---take of the exam. On a case---by--- case basis a determination will be made by the Associate Dean Graduate Programs, in consultation with the supervisor, whether the re-take of the exam includes both written papers and oral or just oral examination. In reporting the results of the second examination, the committee will be limited to recommending either a pass (i.e., no more than one negative vote), or fail. A student will be required to withdraw from the program upon a second failure of any candidacy component.

**Extension to Candidacy Requirement Deadline**

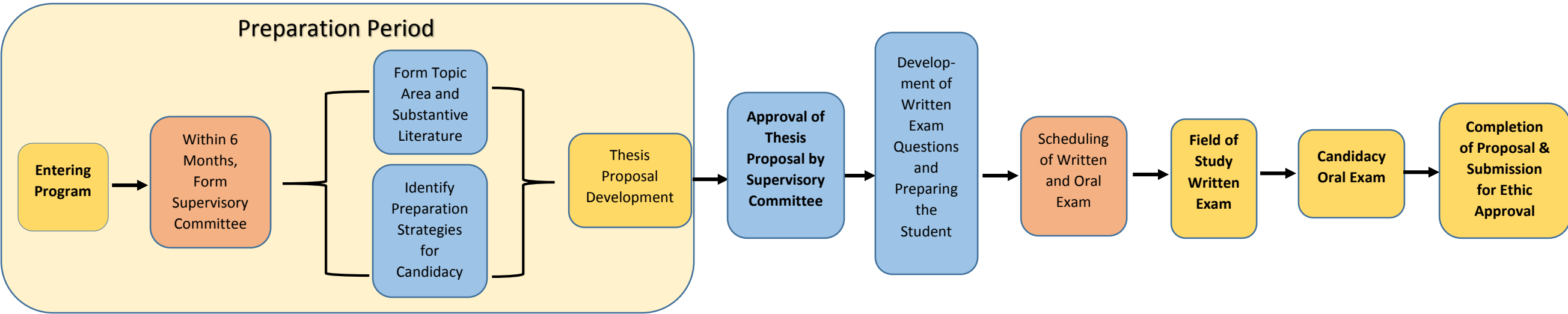
Students who will not complete their candidacy requirements by the end of their 28th month in the program must have an extension request approved by FGS. When requesting an extension, the student and supervisor should discuss an approximate date of the written/oral exam and plan the extension request around that date. Once a date has been decided, the extension request form ([http://grad.ucalgary.ca/sites/grad.ucalgary.ca/files/rextension request.pdf](http://grad.ucalgary.ca/sites/grad.ucalgary.ca/files/rextension_request.pdf)) should be completed with an explanation of the reasons for the delay. The form needs to be completed and signed by the supervisor and Associate Dean Graduate Programs, and submitted by the Faculty of Nursing Graduate Programs Office to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for Approval.



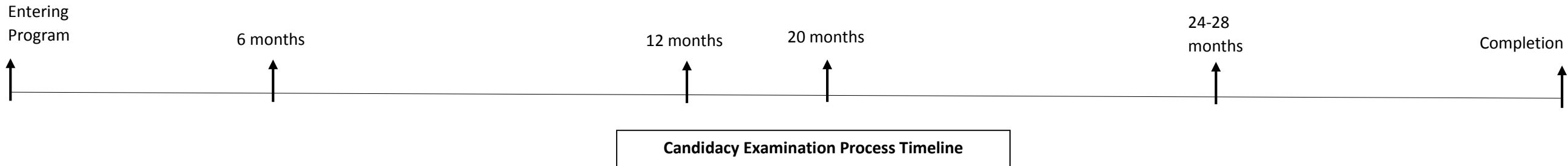
### Faculty of Nursing Candidacy Examination Process Flowchart and Timeline

#### EVALUATIVE MILESTONES

(Successful completion of each milestone is required prior to beginning dissertation research)



### Completion of Required Course Work





UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
 FACULTY OF NURSING  
 Graduate Programs

APPROVAL OF THESIS PROPOSAL

**This form must be completed in order for the student to submit the proposal for ethics approval**

TO: FACULTY OF NURSING RESEARCH OFFICE

FROM:

DATE:

STUDENT:

PROPOSED TITLE OF THESIS:

We the undersigned Supervisory Committee Members have approved the above proposal:

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE SIGNATURES	
Typed Name	Signature
Supervisor:	
Member:	
Member:	
Member:	
Member:	
Member:	

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Associate Dean, Research)

Copy to: Graduate Program Office

/fq  
 2013-11-05

**Exam Timeframe Doctoral Field of Study Candidacy**

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SUPERVISOR AND STUDENT AT LEAST 2 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE ORAL EXAMINATION.**

Please enter all dates into your calendars. Return completed form to Laura Thomas in PF 2264 - lthomas@ucalgary.ca  
 From this form the formal paperwork will be drawn up which will require the student's and the supervisor's signatures.

<b>STUDENT:</b>	<b>STUDENT E-MAIL:</b>	<b>ID No:</b>
<b>SUPERVISOR:</b>		
Will you require any computer/technological equipment - laptop, screen, data projector?		

Examining Committee Membership: a) Neutral Chair, b) Supervisor, c) Supervisory Committee Members, d) 2 new members of which one is the Internal External. The Internal External must be from another faculty/department on campus, even if there is already someone from another faculty/department on the Supervisory Committee.

Note, a CV must be provided for any member who has not previously served in a supervisory or examiner capacity. The c.v. must accompany this form.

TITLE (Dr., Prof., Mr., Ms, etc.) & NAME	FACULTY/ DEPARTMENT	IN ATTENDANCE? (Yes or No)	E-MAIL ADDRESS
NEUTRAL CHAIR: (Determined by Assoc Dean)			
<b>SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE</b>			
SUPERVISOR:			
CO-SUPERVISOR (only if applicable):			
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER:			
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER:			
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER:			
<b>Two additional members:</b>			
NEW MEMBER (from Faculty of Nursing):			
INTERNAL EXTERNAL (Internal to the University of Calgary/External to the Faculty of Nursing):			
<b>NOTE: The candidate must not be given the exam questions before the Notice of Oral has been approved by the Associate Dean, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Nursing</b>			
Date when the doctoral proposal was approved in principle by supervisory committee	DATE		
Supervisor gives student the examination (5 weeks prior to oral). Student has up to 3 weeks to complete the written component.	DATE		
Student submits completed examination to the Supervisor (2 weeks prior to oral).	DATE		
Student undertakes oral examination	DATE	START TIME (2 Hours)	ROOM (booked by supervisor)



## UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY FACULTY OF NURSING

### DOCTORAL PROGRAM CANDIDACY EXAMINATION TEMPLATE

Student:

Week of:            Date when exam to be sent electronically to the candidate:

Date when exam to be returned electronically to the graduate programs administrator:

Supervisor:

Instructions to candidate:

Attached are three questions that will comprise your candidacy examination. Each question will address one of the three areas in relation to scholarship in your field of studies:

- the philosophy of science/methodology/theory that underpins the existing knowledge in your chosen area of nursing research;
- the substantive knowledge/literature in your chosen field related to your research/topic germane to the research question; and
- the argumentation of an issue that stems from your thesis proposal.

For each question write one (1) paper with a maximum of 20-25 pages excluding references and appendices. You must answer all three questions using APA format.

**You may contact your supervisor at any time during the exam, however, at no time during the written portion of the candidacy examination are students permitted to seek assistance related to exam content/processes from other students or other colleagues. Such input on the written examination would constitute cheating.**

**The purpose of the examination is to assess the capabilities of only the student who is writing the examination.**

**This is a confidential document. The questions or answers are not to be shared with anyone other than the examining committee.**

Questions:

**Notice of Candidacy Oral Examination** **This is a retake exam.**

*The Faculty of Nursing Graduate Programs Office must receive this notice no later than eight weeks prior to the date of the oral examination. Please note that no changes can be made to the examining committee and/or the scheduling of an approval Faculty of Nursing examination without the consent of the Associate Dean Graduate Program.*

Candidate:

Date:

Area of Study:

Degree:

Specialization:

Date and Time of Examination:

Location of Examination:

Examining Committee\*\*:

Faculty of Nursing Evaluation Criteria  
FOS Written Exam and FOS Oral Examination

The role of the examining committee is to read the three papers, evaluate the written work first and then in the oral examination ask substantive questions of the student and seek clarification and /or expansion of points not adequately covered in the written work.

**Evaluation Criteria**

The examinations are evaluated on a pass/fail basis. The written papers (5000-6250 words each) are evaluated as a whole and oral defense will be reviewed by each examiner to determine whether the student has:

- Addressed the examination questions
- Demonstrated logical development of arguments and defense of positions
- Showed evidence of critical and analytical thinking
- Demonstrated substantive knowledge of the declared field (s) from the related literature declared both in the reading list and beyond.
- Integrated knowledge about disciplinary controversies and issues in nursing
- Developed arguments and explicit stances that are derived from a theoretical, methodological, and/or historical perspective of the nursing discipline and other relevant disciplines
- Accurately represented cited sources and authors
- Accurately used APA format
- Demonstrated competence in communication (parsimony, clarity and accuracy of language use)

Because the examination is integrative in nature, the examination criteria is the same for both but evaluated separately. The examiners will record in writing (see Appendix G) using the above criteria their assessment of the written FOS exam and hand this to the neutral chair prior to the start of the examination. Each examiner will write their own questions from the written work and determine if the student can articulate sufficient responses, clarify and extend their written work during the oral exam.

The student must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examination committee that he/she has met the criteria taking into consideration, as a whole, the written work and the oral exam in order to “Pass” and proceed in the program.

The committee will make recommendations to the Associate Dean Graduate Programs a “Pass” or a “Fail”.

**Pass:** There is sufficient evidence that the evaluation criteria have been met. The student will proceed in the program.

**Fail:** The students’ work has not met the criteria in one or both elements (written and oral)



### Examiner's Report on FOS Written Candidacy

*Please print or type this form and use reverse for additional comments (if needed).*

Name of Candidate	Degree	Department
Date and Time of Oral Examination		Place
<p>This report should be completed by each of the designated examiners as listed on the Notice of Candidacy Oral Examination <b>before</b> the examination and delivered to the person chairing the examination committee at the <b>beginning</b> of the oral. This report is intended to serve as a record of each examiner's assessment of the written papers as presented by the candidate before any corrections or amendments have been made resulting from the comments of the examiners. It will become part of the student and supervisory records. After the examination, this report may be made available to the student upon request. Questions about the use of this information should be directed to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Advisor, Faculty of Graduate Studies, (403) 220-4938</p> <p>As this report is the only record of the quality of the written papers, it should attempt to be comprehensive with respect to the general presentation. Although detailed comments on specific topics are not required, the report should endeavor to cover the following: (please see Evaluation Criteria Document)</p>		
<i>Examiner's Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>