PhD and MS-PhD Programs HANDBOOK

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER SCHOOL

OF NURSING 2025 – 2026

University of Rochester Mission:
The University of Rochester's mission is to Learn, Discover, Heal, Create⸺and Make the World Ever Better.

UR Meliora Values
The University of Rochester is defined by a deep commitment to **Meliora – ever better**. Embedded in that ideal are the values we share: **Equity, Leadership, Integrity, Openness, Respect, and Accountability**.
The **UR School of Nursing** is guided by this commitment and our **SON Unification Model.**

SCHOOL OF
NURSING
UNIVERSITY *of* ROCHESTER

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SECTION I. GETTING STARTED

This handbook is meant to be used in conjunction with the University of Rochester's Regulations and Policies for Graduate Students. It is also a supplement to the School of Nursing (SON) Student Handbook, which houses information applicable to all SON students, faculty, and staff. Many important policies (e.g., compliance requirements, student records, and/or procedures for submitting formal complaints) within the SON Student Handbook are not repeated in this document. PhD students are expected to review the SON Student Handbook and to remain informed of all SON-wide policies. The SON Student Handbook's table of contents is reprinted in the PhD handbook appendix.

Founded in 1978, the PhD program was one of the earliest nursing PhD programs in the country. The PhD program exemplifies the Meliora values as students Learn, Discover, Heal, Create, and make the world ever better through the specific lens of improving health outcomes and nursing/health practice research. Inclusivity, welcoming, and belonging are evident in our holistic admission practices, our diverse and inclusive student cohorts and faculty, and in the focus of our dissertation studies, which often examine social determinants of health and focus on under- served and at-risk individuals.

School, Work, and Life Balance

Becoming a doctoral student reflects a major commitment and is a transition period to a new and added life responsibilities. We encourage you to take advantage of University and SON resources to assist you when needed. One commonly asked question is about whether to continue to work while also enrolled as a student.

Students who maintain full-time registration should treat coursework as a full-time effort, and they need to carefully consider their academic commitments prior to making any outside commitments. All students should develop a schedule that allocates multiple hours per week for reading and writing outside of class meetings. Additional hours may be devoted to research assistant or teaching assistant requirements.

Full-time PhD students are strongly encouraged to limit employment to 1-2 days a week. PhD students with certain fellowships may have restrictions on the number of hours per week of non-research work. MS-PhD students are strongly encouraged to limit employment to 1 day per week. Information on resources available to students, including support services and wellness initiatives, can be found on the SON website.

1.1 SON and PhD Administrative Structure

Administrative leadership for the PhD program rests with the PhD Program Director, who reports to and shares responsibility with the Dean of the SON and the Senior Associate Dean for Research. The Senior Associate Dean for Research has delegated certain administrative and leadership responsibilities to the PhD Program Director, in accordance with University [Regulations and Policies Concerning Graduate Studies](#).

The PhD program is subject to all the rules and regulations for graduate study within the University under the leadership of the Vice Provost and University Dean of Graduate Education. This handbook is meant to supplement and specify additional aspects specific to PhD students in the School of Nursing.

The PhD Program Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee advises the PhD Program Director on student and programmatic concerns. The PhD Program Director chairs the Subcommittee. The School of Nursing's Senior Associate Dean for Research is an ex officio member. Subcommittee members include elected faculty with experience in the program and non-voting student representatives. Meetings consist of an open portion, in which topics are discussed with participation of student representatives, and a closed portion (held without the student representatives) for confidential discussion topics.

The subcommittee acts on student admission applications, provides ongoing review and approval of the PhD curriculum, makes recommendations regarding student progression, and advises on student and programmatic concerns. Working within existing University and SON policies and bylaws, recommendations are forwarded to the SON Curriculum Committee and Student Affairs Committee as specified in SON bylaws.

For administration of the MS-PhD and MNE-PhD combined programs, the PhD Programs Director and the PhD Subcommittee work in conjunction with Master's Program Directors and the Subcommittee for Master's Programs.

Student Representation Within the SON

The PhD Student Forum (or Doctoral Forum) was formed by PhD students in the School of Nursing who wanted an organization tailored to their specific needs. The functions of the PhD Student Forum are to facilitate an exchange of ideas and information among PhD students; and to coordinate and facilitate interchange among PhD students, the PhD Program Director, various SON faculty, and other guests outside of the SON.

1.2 Offices and Equipment

PhD Program Office

The PhD Program Office is located on the fourth floor of Helen Wood Hall (HWH) and is staffed Monday through Friday during business hours. The PhD Administrator manages the

office and is a resource for any student questions or requests.

Student Workspaces and Equipment

Shared doctoral student areas: the 4th floor of HWH has several spaces dedicated to doctoral student use. Both PhD and DNP students have access to these areas. Students are responsible for protecting and caring for the valuable equipment and furnishings in these areas. This includes maintaining the security of the limited-access entry, keeping kitchen areas clean, and properly shutting down computers.

Student offices: Each student is assigned shared office space with a desktop computer. As with common shared areas, students are expected to maintain the security and cleanliness of their assigned offices. Office phones are available upon request for students conducting dissertation research; please contact the program office to make such a request. Changes in assigned offices will be permitted if space is available and all parties involved agree to the change. Contact the program office to request a change. If you lose or do not return an office key that is assigned to you, you will incur a charge of $15 or the current cost to replace that key.

Technology: Students receive a URMC username and password, which provides access to online library resources, intranet resources, and email. IT assigns these resources and provides instructions for access from campus, home, and/or mobile devices. Off-site access to secure drives may be restricted. **Students should check their university email daily during the academic year and at least weekly during summer months for important messages.**

Printing and Copying: Use HWH printers only when a hard copy is needed. Copiers are available for student use in Helen Wood Hall and Miner Library. All copiers require a pre-paid copy card, which can be purchased in the Miner Library.

Business cards: PhD students may have business cards made by placing an order through the program office. Students are charged for cost of the cards.

SECTION II. THE PHD CURRICULUM

Mission Statement

In pursuit of Meliora, the UR School of Nursing PhD in Nursing & Health Science prepares independent scientists and academics who strive to improve health outcomes and health equity in interdisciplinary, diverse, and inclusive settings.

2.1 Goals and Learning Outcomes

The program's goals, outcomes, and curriculum were revised during Academic Year 2024-2025. The new curriculum takes effect for all students admitted in or after Fall 2025. (Note: Individualized degree plans were made to accommodate in-progress part-time students)

Goals and Outcomes, Revised October 2024
Approved by SON faculty vote

The goals of the PhD program are to produce:	Graduates are able to:
Scientists who generate meaningful knowledge for health and health care, using rigorous design and methodology	1. Critically evaluate existing knowledge and theoretical orientations to formulate significant research questions 2. Conduct (inclusive of design, implementation, and interpretation) rigorous, ethically sound health research 3. Demonstrate fluency in the range of theoretical approaches and philosophical underpinnings used in nursing practice and health research
Expert scholars who disseminate their work to advance healthcare practice, theory, and/or policy	4. Evidence expertise in the breadth of the discipline and in-depth knowledge in a specific area of science 5. Advocate for improvements in practice, policy changes, and health equity, based on a growing expertise in a substantive area 6. Disseminate the results of their work through avenues such as scholarly manuscripts and presentations
Evolving leaders who steward their professions through engagement in education, service, and mentorship	7. Engage in multidisciplinary scientific inquiry, representing disciplinary perspectives 8. Contribute to university, local community, or regional/national organizations 9. Engage learners using innovative and evidence-based teaching strategies

Goals and Outcomes Prior to October 2024

The goals of the PhD program are to produce:	After successful completion of the PhD program, the graduate will be able to:
Scholars who develop and refine the evidence base for culturally congruent, collaborative health care of individuals, groups, and populations	1. Critique, synthesize, and apply theory and research evidence on clinically relevant issues and problems 2. Articulate the contributions of the graduate's own research and that of their discipline

Scientists who design, conduct, and critique research for the improvement of health care and the advancement of theory and practice	3. Design, execute, and disseminate clinical research that is
	   a. Rigorous
	   b. Ethical
	   c. Theoretically congruent
	   d. Clinically and socially significant

Leaders and mentors who contribute to the dissemination, teaching, and advancement of research in academic and clinical settings and in national and international arenas	4. Demonstrate progression toward a leadership role in health science research, education and policy 5. Recognize the importance of mentoring students and facilitating professional advancement of colleagues in clinical and educational settings 6. Disseminate information through scholarly presentations and publications to promote the grown of the profession

2.2 Overview of the Program

PhD study is highly individualized and self-directed. The PhD curriculum can be conceptualized as encompassing several "phases," but it's important to note that these phases are all interconnected and interdependent. Please refer to later sections of the handbook for more detailed information regarding specific milestones, which, when accomplished, move you to the next "phase."

Coursework and Qualifying Examination

The program begins with 2 years of intensive full-time coursework for full-time students, which becomes increasingly specialized based on planned research directions and individual clinical or teaching tracks. The semester-by-semester plan of study is mapped out with the academic advisor before starting coursework (samples of program degree plans can be found on the SON

website). All students complete a total of 360 hours of RA/TA work, which requires about 6 hours per week if completed over 4 academic semesters. Students are also required to complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and annual review in consultation with their academic advisor.

The Qualifying Exam is administered after student completion of required core coursework (NUR 514). The qualifying exam demonstrates students are prepared to advance to candidacy, undertake independent research, and begin the dissertation.

Dissertation Proposal, Research, and Defense

With their academic advisors' guidance, students form a dissertation advisory committee and identify a primary advisor from among eligible SON faculty (see Section IV, "The Dissertation Process"). The dissertation proposal is a written document that is developed by the student and revised in response to critique by their dissertation advisory committee. The proposal may be written concurrently with final coursework or during an intensive post-coursework phase. Many assignments in the core coursework are foundational to the dissertation proposal and may serve as content drafts for the proposal.

Students who maintain full-time registration should treat coursework as a full-time effort. History shows that students who return to full-time employment and attempt to do the proposal in their spare time have difficulty maintaining momentum toward program completion and meeting program progression requirements.

When the proposal is judged ready for defense, the student prepares a public presentation of the proposed research, which is followed by a critique and oral defense conducted in private with the dissertation advisory committee. Additional changes in the written proposal may be requested at that time.

Dissertation research may involve collecting psychological, behavioral, experimental, and/or biophysical data from individuals, families, and communities. Research may also involve testing clinical interventions developed or refined by the student; analyzing previously collected data from national datasets, faculty or local research projects; or a combination of these.

Once the proposal has been successfully defended and research review board approval has been secured, the student conducts the dissertation research project independently under the guidance of the committee. The final dissertation is then written, revised with critique from the committee, and presented publicly, followed by a private defense.

The University has five dates on which PhDs are officially conferred each year, and each conferral date has a corresponding cycle of deadlines for the dissertation defense. The PhD degree is conferred after a successful defense and submission of final documentation (as per the [conferral date's corresponding deadline](#)) to the office of Graduate Education.

2.3 Coursework

The University of Rochester requires a minimum of 90 credit hours for completion of the PhD degree. A maximum of 30 credit hours from a master's degree can be applied toward the 90-credit hour minimum. The remaining 60 credits are usually taken at the University as a matriculated student. If a required course has been taken prior to matriculation, with a grade of B- or better, it will satisfy the course requirement, but not the credit requirement; Additional credit hours will be required to meet the 60-credit hour minimum after matriculation.

The core curriculum for PhD students is as follows:

Curriculum Effective for Students in Cohort Year 2025 and Onward
Approved by SON Faculty in January 2025 and NYS Department of Education in April 2025

Course #	Course Name	Credits
NUR 515	Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations of Scientific Inquiry in Health Care Science	3
NUR 510	Applied Statistics I	3
NUR 511	Foundational Principles of Quantitative Research Design	3
NUR 555	Foundational Principles of Qualitative Research Design	3
NUR 512	Applied Statistics II	3
NUR 518	Advanced Qualitative Research Design and Methods	3
NUR 513	Research Measurement	3
NUR 507	Research Appraisal & Synthesis	3
NUR 519	Population Health and Health Policy	3
IND 501	Ethics and Professional Integrity	1
NUR 514	Grant Writing and Proposal Development	3
NUR 569	Dissertation Seminar	2
Cognate Courses	[Three 3-credit courses, varying by student]	9
NUR 590	Dissertation Workshop (required until proposal defense)	0 (see "Special Registrations")
NUR 595	PhD Research Credits	18* (see "Special Registrations")
	TOTAL	**60 credits**

* A maximum of 12 credits of NUR 595 may be taken prior to proposal defense

Curriculum for Students in Cohort Year 2024 and Earlier

Course #	Course Name	Credits
NUR 560	Role of the Clinical Researcher	0
NUR 505	Epistemology and Concept Development	3
NUR 506	Epistemology and Theory Construction	3
NUR 507	Research Appraisal and Synthesis	3
NUR 508	Writing and Publishing in the Health Sciences	2
NUR 510	Applied Statistics I	3
NUR 512	Applied Statistics II	3
NUR 511	Basic Principles of Quantitative Research Design	3
NUR 555	Basic Principles of Qualitative Research Design	3
NUR 513	Research Measurement	3
NUR 514	Research Integration and Proposal Development	3
IND 501	Ethics and Professional Integrity in Clinical Research	1
Cognate Courses	[Four 3-credit courses, selected individually by student]	12
NUR 590	Dissertation Workshop (required until proposal defense)	0 (see "Special Registrations")
NUR 595	PhD Research Credits	18* (see "Special Registrations")
	TOTAL	**60 credits**

* A maximum of 12 credits of NUR 595 may be taken prior to proposal defense

Course Prerequisites and Corequisites

The tables below summarize all required prerequisites and corequisites for PhD core courses

Curriculum Cohort Year 2025 and Onward

Course	Prerequisite(s)	Corequisite(s)
NUR 507	NUR 511 and 555	
NUR 512	NUR 510	
NUR 518	NUR 555	
NUR 513	NUR 510, 511, and 515	
NUR 514	NUR 510, 511, 555, 515, 512, 518, 513, and 507	
NUR 519	NUR 511, 555, 518, 513, 507, 515, 510, 512	
NUR 569	NUR 514	
NUR 590	NUR 514	

Curriculum Cohort Years 2024 and Earlier

Course	Prerequisite(s)	Corequisite(s)
NUR 507		NUR 510 and 511
NUR 508	NUR 507	
NUR 512	NUR 510	
NUR 513	NUR 506, 507, 511, and 512	
NUR 590	NUR 514	

All required coursework and RA/TA hours must be completed prior to the dissertation proposal defense.

Notes for Masters-PhD Students

As of July 2025, the PhD program is not currently accepting applications for the MS-PhD program pathway. Current MS-PhD students should direct questions about their degree plan to their academic advisors and/or the PhD program director.

Both the learning outcomes and requirements above and master's program learning outcomes and requirements apply to the MS/PhD and MNE/PhD programs, with the following exceptions:

1. The master's programs research requirement (ordinarily NUR 400 and 401) is met by taking the PhD research courses NUR 510, 511, and 512
2. One or more PhD cognates (varies by specialty track) are replaced by select master's-level courses.

2.4 Cognate Courses

Students are encouraged to gain interdisciplinary exposure by taking cognates outside the SON. Cognate courses are chosen with the assistance of the advisor to advance students to the cutting edge of their chosen research area. These courses may be focused on topical content or research methods. Cognates may be chosen from among courses carrying doctoral credit anywhere in the University with prior permission of the advisor and PhD Program Director. For courses offered by other University departments, consult the University's Course Descriptions & Course Schedules (CDCS) database and or individual school/department websites.

2.5 Special Registrations: NUR 590, 591, 595, and 995/999

Dissertation Workshop (NUR 590)

The purpose of the 0-credit Dissertation Workshop is to assist students who have completed their coursework in sustaining momentum toward proposal defense. It provides a regular, organized opportunity to present work on proposal status and to receive feedback from faculty and fellow students.

Continuous registration and participation in NUR 590 is required from the semester following completion of NUR 514 through the dissertation proposal defense. However, registering for NUR 590 alone does not constitute full-time or part-time enrollment. If no other credits are taken, a student must register for NUR 995 or NUR 999 (see below) in conjunction with NUR 590.

Independent Study (NUR 591)

When no cognate in a student's area of interest is available at the University, and a University faculty member with the appropriate expertise is willing to supervise an independent study course, such a course may serve as a cognate. Independent study courses, if taken, should comprise only a small portion (3 credits) of the student's program of study. An independent study is not to be used if a course covering the same content is offered at the University.

Prior to registering for an independent study course, a "Summary of Proposed Activity for NUR 591 Reading Course/Independent Study" form (see handbook appendix for a link) should be completed by the student and supervising faculty. The request is then forwarded to the Program Director and Senior Associate Dean for Research for review and approval of the curricular integrity of the proposed independent study.

PhD Research Credits (NUR 595)

A total of 18 dissertation research credits (NUR 595) is required for graduation. These credits can be taken in varying amounts each semester until the required number of credits is met. A contract is completed for each semester and a grade is issued, supported by the completed contract. The contract specifies goals and outcomes required for successful completion of assigned course credit and is signed by the student and advisor. All NUR 595 forms must be submitted to the program office prior to the start of the semester. Students may not take more than 12 credits of NUR 595 before completing the dissertation proposal defense.

Continuation of PhD Enrollment (NUR 995 and NUR 999)

The University of Rochester requires continuous enrollment each fall and spring semester from matriculation through completion. There are various scenarios in which it is not possible to

register for enough credit-bearing courses to achieve full-time status, depending on a student's completion of formal coursework, the number of NUR 595 credits they have used, and/or their progress toward their dissertation/proposal.

In such cases, students maintain continuous enrollment by registering for either NUR 995 or NUR 999 (Continuation of Doctoral Enrollment and Doctoral Dissertation, respectively). Students enrolled in NUR 995 are considered to have part-time status, while students enrolled in NUR 999 have full-time status. Neither of these registrations is a credit-bearing course. Students register for NUR 995/999 under their advisor's name and pay a continuing enrollment fee each semester. An SON-internal registration form is also submitted to the program office prior to the start of the semester.

There are important financial considerations to bear in mind when choosing between NUR 995 and NUR 999. For one example, NUR 999 allows for continued deferment of student loan repayment, but NUR 995 does not. Students are strongly encouraged to consult with the program office prior to making a decision.

2.6 RA and TA Requirements

Assistantships prepare students to conduct their dissertation research and assume roles as academic faculty. Every PhD student is required to engage in 360 hours of paid or unpaid teaching and research assistant work as a part of their program of study.
Assistantship experiences are selected with the guidance of the faculty advisor and completed under the guidance of a faculty mentor. **Before work is begun**, advisors must approve in writing (forms available electronically; see handbook appendix) each RA or TA experience, identifying the nature of the research or teaching assignment and describing the planned research or teaching activities.

The goal of completing RA hours is to gain familiarity with the full scope of activities of clinical research. Students should seek exposure to as many aspects of research as possible, both to prepare for the dissertation and to gain essential skills that may not be established in the dissertation project. Research assistantships are identified by the student and/or academic advisor. Academic advisors approve all RA experiences. Additional opportunities may be posted by the program director. Students may also approach faculty and inquire about opportunities with the agreement of their advisor. In rare cases, RA hours may be done with faculty outside the SON who agree to supervise the student in the learning experience, if the advisor and program director approve and if the advisor is willing to maintain contact with the outside research supervisor to insure a productive experience. Students maintain a cumulative summary of research experiences using the RA hours log form (see handbook appendix).

The goal of TA work is to provide experience for students who anticipate future roles as academic faculty. All TA experiences need to be approved first by the advisor, then by the program director. Experiences may be arranged based on the student's individual learning plan. School of Nursing needs for TA will be shared with students by the program director who will receive requests from the Associate Deans for Education. Opportunities for TA experiences may

also be discussed with faculty or the program director. Students should seek out a variety of course formats and levels to gain a broad exposure to teaching. TA work may include giving lectures, grading of papers and exams, leading discussion groups, and other experiences. The TA form describes the kinds of activities students may be asked to perform. Students should maintain a cumulative summary of teaching experiences using the TA hours log form.

After RA or TA work is completed, the student documents the number of hours completed for each activity along with the total number of hours completed. Students then have the hours and activities signed off by the supervising researcher or instructor. Once the signed form is submitted to the program office, RA/TA hours are stored in office records and recorded on the student's academic transcript. Students are responsible for keeping a personal record of hours and activities completed for each RA and TA experience. This documentation may be requested to validate the total number of hours recorded on the summary form. Forms and skills logs are available electronically via the program office Box folder (see handbook appendix).

2.7 PhD Research Day

PhD Research Day is an event in early May (following the end of classes) in which students present short presentations to an audience of fellow students and faculty, followed by brief discussion and critique. The goals of PhD Research Day are to:

1. facilitate student progress toward proposal defense by encouraging them to work with their advisors to plan their brief presentations;
2. showcase the areas of student research interest for SON faculty and fellow students;
3. provide a forum for exchange of ideas and suggestions to strengthen students' proposals;
4. create a conference-like venue to develop presentation and critique skills; and
5. serve as an annual milestone to inspire continued clarification and refinement of dissertation plans

Participation for the entire day is required of any student who has not yet defended their dissertation proposal. Students on Leave of Absence are excused. Presentations are not graded. Advisors are also expected to attend at least their advisees' presentations, and all faculty and students are welcome and encouraged to attend for the entire day.

Presentation length is determined based on the number of presenters and is generally 10 minutes with a 5- to10-minute Q&A session. Students present in reverse order of their entry year in the program (i.e., first-year students present first, followed by second-year students, and so on). Presentations should reflect the students' thinking to date on their projected dissertation proposal. Students' topics or plans may change from one year to the next. Possible levels of development follow, recognizing that variations will occur:

- First-year PhD students should describe a problem and its significance, highlights of literature to date, and propose a research question with possible design to answer the question. First year MS-PhD students should at least be able to identify a problem,

question, and literature highlights.

- 2nd-year PhD students should have a complete design, with sample, recruitment plan, etc., which they would have developed in NUR 514. 2nd-year MS-PhD students will be partway to this goal.

- Presenters in year 3 (and beyond) would be MS-PhD students at a similar program stage as 2nd-year students, described above. Other 3rd-time (or more) presenters should have a well-developed proposal and be on the brink of proposal defense.

Preparation Tips:

It is expected that some points of your research plan are not yet finalized. The earlier you are in the program, the less you are expected to have decided. The point of this day is to give a snapshot of where you are and get helpful input from your peers and especially from faculty you may not have discussed this with before.

You will be asked to email your presentation slides to the office prior to Research Day. Budget roughly about one slide per minute of your talk. Decide the main points that you will be making and divide your content into those slides. The area that usually requires the most synthesis is the literature review—the maximum would be 2-3 slides. Use traditional research headings like: Problem and Significance, Purpose, Background Literature, Research Questions, Methods. Do not put full sentences on the slides; use phrases that you will then expand on.

Meet with your advisor to plan your slides and practice your presentation. Do not prepare a script to read unless absolutely necessary. Practice your presentation at a normal pace to be sure you can deliver it within the time limit, including acknowledgments and side comments. A timekeeper will be empowered to cut off both students and faculty who go beyond the time limits for the presentation and the Q&A.

Presenters are expected to attend and participate in the entire day. Advisors know that they are expected to be there for your presentation or make other arrangements for someone to support you and take notes. Other faculty will come in and out, as in a real research conference, attending the topics that interest them.

SECTION III. THE QUALIFYING EXAM

Policies effective for all students admitted in Fall 2023 and later. Qualifying examination policies for students admitted before this date are detailed in previous handbook editions.

3.1 Purpose

The qualifying examination is a University requirement for all PhD programs. Per University policy, upon passing the qualifying exam, students are awarded candidacy status, defined as "an indication that a doctoral student has developed sufficient mastery of a discipline to produce an original research contribution in their field." (UR Regulations and University Policies Concerning Graduate Studies)

The examination evaluates students' critical and theoretical thinking regarding research design and knowledge development in nursing and health care science. It assesses the ability to apply design principles to specific research areas, to synthesize and integrate course content, and to communicate ideas logically and succinctly in written and oral formats.

In general, exam questions require students to integrate content and use methods taught in individual courses. Responses need to reflect a clear position that is well argued and supported with appropriate rationale and justification. Because exam questions will be applied to a specific area of health or healthcare science, it is expected that you will have compiled a list of references in your area of interest. These reference lists will have developed throughout the process of successfully completing core coursework.

3.2 Timing

The qualifying examination consists of both written and oral portions. The written exam is administered over three days prior to the start of the Fall semester, and the oral portion occurs at the beginning of the semester. Logistical details, including examination dates and detailed instructions, will be released earlier in the year via notifications emailed to students and faculty by the program administrator. Students are required to take the examination the summer after completing NUR 514. For students requiring accommodations, please ensure the Program Director receives notice from the ADA Coordinator at least two months before the scheduled date.

3.3 Format

Written Exam

The written portion is completed over 3 successive days from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. The written exam can be completed from a location of the student's choice. Timing is strictly observed, so reliable internet access is critical.

The written exam consists of essay responses to questions. Each exam day is dedicated to one question prompt. You are expected to develop and defend a scholarly argument in your response. The clarity and logic of your writing and the ability to apply the concepts you have learned are most important.

Oral Exam

The oral portion consists of a one-hour oral examination by committee and is held approximately one to two weeks after the written portion. Committee questions may include clarification or expansion of written exam responses. Questions may also extend to additional areas from completed coursework.

After answering questions, the student is excused, and the examination committee will discuss results and vote on the final exam outcome. Per University regulations, all votes are recorded, and a majority vote is required for passing. The student is asked to return to the room and will be informed of the exam outcome. The total time commitment may be an hour and a half to two hours.

3.4 Assessment and Outcomes

A committee of three faculty members is responsible for reading the written portion, conducting the oral examination, providing an overall evaluation of the student's performance on the examination, and indicating the final exam outcome (pass or fail).

A grading rubric will be used to evaluate performance on the exam. The rubric will be made available to students before the examination. Remember that the exam is evaluated by both written and oral responses; to pass the qualifying exam, you must pass both the written and oral portions. Additionally, all three essays in the written portion must meet minimum satisfactory grading criteria.

Consequences of Passing
1. The student has achieved the significant milestone of PhD candidacy.
2. The student may proceed, when ready, to Oral Proposal Defense.

Consequences of Failure
1. The student will be placed on academic probation.
2. A remediation plan will be developed with the advisor, and reviewed by the program director, based on areas for improvement identified by the examination committee.
   - For example, the plan may include a focus on specific course content, development of written or oral presentation skills, time management skills, development of content expertise in a specific specified area of interest, etc.
3. The student may not progress to Oral Proposal Defense until they retake and pass the qualifying exam.
4. The exam may be retaken only once. Failure to pass the qualifying examination on a second attempt will result in separation from the program.

3.5 Retaking the Qualifying Exam

There are two options for retaking the examination:
- the student may wait one year to retake the exam; or
- the student may ask for a make-up exam between the Fall and Spring semesters

The second option requires very careful deliberation with the advisor and demonstrated progress on the remediation plan. Requests to retake the exam between the Fall and Spring must be made in writing by the student to the program director. The request must be submitted before Thanksgiving break and supported by the student's advisor. If the request is approved, the program director will arrange a committee and examination schedule.

SECTION IV. THE DISSERTATION PROCESS

The SON adheres to dissertation policies as per the University of Rochester's [Regulations and Policies Concerning Graduate Studies]. Detailed requirements for completing the PhD can be found on the [Graduate Education website], where the dissertation manual is updated regularly.

4.1 Forming a Dissertation Advisory Committee

The academic advisor assists the student in selecting the dissertation committee. The academic advisor may serve on the dissertation committee as primary advisor or internal member, if so desired. Students are strongly advised to first select a primary advisor before seeking out other committee members. Selecting additional faculty to serve on the dissertation committee should be done with guidance by the person who has agreed to fulfill the primary advisor role on the dissertation.

PhD students invite at least 3 faculty members to serve on their dissertation committees, based on the potential of the faculty to guide the proposed research. This selection may be made as early as desired and at least 6 months prior to oral defense to allow sufficient time for discussion of the dissertation.

SON guidelines for selecting committee members are as follows:

1. Primary dissertation advisor
    a. Associate or full professor, on the tenure track, with primary dissertation advisory experience; OR
    b. A tenure-track assistant professor may be eligible, given strong evidence of an emergent program of research that includes
        i. First-authored, data-based publications
        ii. Extramural research funding as primary investigator
        iii. Minimum of one year on the tenure track; and
        iv. Previous membership on a PhD dissertation committee preferred

2. Internal committee member
    a. SON tenure-track assistant, associate, or full professor; OR
    b. An associate or full professor of clinical nursing (PhD or DNSc) may be eligible

Note: Per University guidelines, instructional, clinical, and research faculty may petition to be included on a permanent roster of faculty eligible to sit on PhD committees. Such individuals should have a demonstrable record of research involvement and peer-reviewed publications.

3. External committee member
    a. Full-time faculty member from outside the SON, with an earned doctorate, holding the rank of assistant professor or higher, on the tenure track.
    b. External committee members may come from other universities.
    c. Faculty with secondary appointments to the SON (and therefore with primary appointments outside the SON) may serve as external committee members

4. Additional committee members (optional)
   a. Must hold a doctorate but need not hold a faculty position, within the UR or elsewhere
   b. See the UR graduate regulations and policies for more information
   c. Must be approved by PhD Program Director, who then petitions the University Dean of Graduate Education before the dissertation defense is scheduled

Students should consult the Program Director if there are questions about faculty eligibility. Proposed members' curriculum vitae should be provided in the following scenarios:
- If an internal member is not on the tenure track and they have not previously served on a dissertation committee
- If an external member has not previously served on a UR dissertation committee

Pending approval of the Program Director, a memo confirming the establishment of the dissertation advisory committee is sent to the student, committee members, and the SON registrar. Ultimately, committee membership is subject to approval by the University Dean of Graduate Studies.

For a visual guide to University committee regulations, please consult the PhD committee matrix on the Graduate Education website

4.2 Dissertation Format Options

Students select the dissertation format in consultation with their committee members. The format option must be agreed to the primary advisor and all committee members.

Dissertations from SON students may be done in one of two formats: (a) a traditional 5-chapter monograph format; or (b) the 3-paper dissertation option, wherein to fulfill the dissertation requirements students write three full-length manuscripts for specific scholarly, peer-reviewed journals, as approved by the dissertation committee. At minimum, all three manuscripts must be fully written, formatted according to journal specifications, and assessed by committee members as being ready for submission. Committee members may additionally require more robust standards (e.g., that one or more manuscripts be submitted or accepted for publication). While the work of the dissertation is the same for either option, students may use the 3-paper option format as a way to enhance dissemination of their scholarship.

Students who have completed the proposal defense and then decide, with their committee members, to change from one dissertation option to the other will forward a written request to the PhD Programs Director that explains the rationale for the change in plans. Students choosing a change from the traditional 5-chapter dissertation option to the 3-paper option should include, in their rationale, how use of the 3 papers in this approach will sustain the focus on a single coherent research topic (not a series of unconnected topics).

Five-Chapter Dissertation Format

The sketch of dissertation chapters below may be used as a general framework for most dissertations, although the primary advisor has the final say on chapter content and format. For the proposal, all descriptions of the project should be in the future tense, ending with a timeline, and the references and appendices. In the completed dissertation, the first three chapters are updated and converted to the past tense, chapters 4 and 5 are added, and the timeline is removed.

Chapter I: Problem and Significance. In this chapter, you describe the phenomenon under study and make the case for the seriousness of the issue you hope to address. Focus on a practical problem that is researchable and clearly identified as an area of interest and relevance to your profession. To convey its importance, include details on the incidence or prevalence of the illness or condition and its effects (physical, psychosocial, economic). Then, after a summary of current knowledge about or response to this problem (brief because you will do this in depth in Chapter II), conclude with an introductory statement of the purpose and overall design of the planned study.

Chapter II: Background and Orientation to the Problem. In this chapter, begin by explaining your orientation to the problem (the philosophical, theoretical, and/or epistemological view that will direct your choice of question and design). You may opt to take a biophysical approach, an epidemiologic one, a political one, a psychological or family-level one, etc. In some cases the rationale behind your choice will be clear, and in others you should defend your chosen approach over other theoretical perspectives. If you are planning a qualitative study, you can still review the main theoretical orientations that have been brought to bear on the issue, and then defend your choice to start over with an open-ended exploratory approach, based on evidence that existing frameworks have not sufficed to understand the problem.

In the main body of the chapter, you present your literature review: what is known about the influences on the problem and any solutions to date. Ideally, it should be organized according to your chosen framework. If there is no theory or framework covering your topic, create subtopics to reflect the areas of inquiry that touch on your focus. Synthesize current knowledge rather than describing individual studies. Use tables and figures as appropriate. Address not just the topics and findings of the research to date, but also the adequacy of the methods that have been used across disciplines to address the problem. If you have done a pilot study or instrument development study that revealed relevant findings, describe it here, concluding with how the main study will build on the pilot work. (If you did pilot work that was mainly to test your methods, describe it in the next chapter.) Conclude the synthesis with a tight summary of what is known and not known about the phenomenon and indicate the gap in knowledge you will fill with the proposed study. Include the specific aims/research questions/hypotheses.

Chapter III: Methods. Use the traditional headings of Design, Sample, Instruments (unless qualitative, in which case describe your methods under data collection), and Procedures (with subheadings for recruitment and data collection, protection of human subjects, and data analysis). Conclude with a timeline for study completion.

- Design: defend your choice of study design based on the literature to date. This includes your choice of a particular qualitative approach or a particular quantitative approach. For a quantitative study, you may provide a model of how variables are proposed to relate to one another.
- Sample: describe your target population, accessible population, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and sample size. Include power analysis if appropriate.
- Instruments: list variables to be measured (they should measure the concepts in the diagram or model in Chapter II if one has been included) and describe each one, as well as the support for your choice of tool or measurement approach. (Provide copies of tools in an Appendix.)
- Procedures: describe recruitment, data collection plans, and steps to be taken for protection of human subjects (or refer readers to RSRB application as appropriate). Data analysis may be organized by aim/research questions and described in depth.
- Analysis: Include very specific information about the quantitative analyses: the specific variables and specific statistical procedures to answer each study question. This level of detail is very helpful to guide the later analysis and ensures that the student and committee are in agreement about what the findings of the research will consist of.
  - For qualitative proposals, describe specifically how text will be prepared and analyzed to reach the desired final product for that type of qualitative approach.
- You may need a section after Data Analysis on how rigor will be maintained and how validity of findings will be optimized

In the final dissertation, quantitative studies should have the analysis section modified to include any ancillary or exploratory analyses and the rationale. Qualitative studies will need most of this chapter thoroughly rewritten to describe and explain the decisions that were made along the way during sampling and analysis.

Chapter IV: Results. This is to be written after completing the research. Opinions differ as to whether you refer to other literature in your Results chapter. Most nursing dissertations save any comments about the relationship of findings to existing literature for Chapter V. Another difference of opinion is on whether the final sample's demographics and characteristics should be described in Chapter III under Sample, or as results in Chapter IV.

For a quantitative study, after presenting the sample description (if not added to Chapter 3) and any initial descriptive results, go through your research questions/hypotheses one by one and present the findings. Avoid going into detail on the analytic steps, which should have been detailed in Chapter III. In the body of the chapter, present only those tables necessary to demonstrate the results relevant to your research questions. Preliminary analyses (such as correlation matrices or interaction tests) may be included as appendices if the primary advisor agrees.

For a qualitative study, present the overall integrated findings first and then lead the reader through the sub-parts of the main findings. For example, if a theory has been developed, present the theory and then provide description and supporting evidence for each component and relationship. If a qualitative description has been developed, present the integrated description and then describe the thematic components.

Chapter V: Discussion. Here you place the findings into context, including how they relate to existing literature and theory, and how they contribute to practice, education, and policy. These topic areas may be used as headings in the chapter. Limitations are acknowledged. Implications for future research are presented, including specific studies that logically follow from this one. Indicators of validity of qualitative findings should be discussed using criteria appropriate to the particular qualitative approach.

Avoid long repetitions of your findings from Chapter 4, providing only brief reminders of the main points as needed.

References: The School of Nursing policy is to use APA format for all references unless a different format is agreed upon by primary advisor and committee members.

Appendices: As needed and per University formatting requirements.

Three-Paper Dissertation Format

Using this format, the PhD dissertation requirement is fulfilled by writing a minimum of three full-length papers in line with the manuscript expectations of the selected journals. The dissertation must form a coherent body of research in a particular scholarly area. Thus, the three papers must represent a single coherent research topic, not a series of unconnected topics.

<u>Example[1]</u>

Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Paper/Manuscript #1
Chapter 3: Paper/Manuscript #2
Chapter 4: Paper/Manuscript #3
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Following this format, in Chapter 1 the student introduces and conveys the importance of the research question that is the focus of the investigation and the specific objectives of each individual paper/manuscript (i.e., each piece of logic or the story undergirding the dissertation that papers #1, #2, #3 will address). This overview should include the purpose and scope of each

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[1] The number of chapters and placement of the papers is not cast in stone. For example, a student's choice to write a traditional literature review and/or methods chapter in order to elaborate on aspects of the research in greater detail than many journals will allow may result in papers being introduced in a different order. This presentational choice could result in the dissertation having more than 5 chapters, based on judgments about the clearest and most effective way to manage the content and sustain the logical flow of the research report.

paper, the methodologies employed, and how the papers are integrated to represent a coherent body of research. In similar fashion, Chapter 5, the concluding chapter, brings everything together, anchoring the research by situating it within current literature and theory and helping the reader understand how the papers, collectively, contribute to a particular knowledge field. Limitations are acknowledged and implications for practice, education, policy, and future research are discussed as well. This presentational choice could result in the dissertation having more than 5 chapters, based on judgments about the clearest and most effective way to manage the content and sustain the logical flow of the research report.

The three papers form the dissertation's core and may include a literature review or meta-analysis, a methods paper (if methods are sufficiently novel), or multiple data-based manuscripts with the literature and methods integrated into each paper. The three papers must be distinct, and at least one should be based on data generated through the dissertation study as specified in the approved proposal.

The student must be listed as first author with the advisor and committee members as co-authors. Authorship should be negotiated between student, primary advisor, and committee members in advance and be consistent with academic standards and journal submission requirements.[2]

At minimum, all three manuscripts must be fully written, formatted according to journal specifications, and assessed by committee members as being ready for submission. Committee members may additionally require more robust standards (e.g., that one or more manuscripts be submitted or accepted for publication).

Three-paper dissertations are subject to the five following administrative policies:

1. Documentation is required by the PhD program office
   a. Form A, submitted at the time of proposal defense
   b. Form B, submitted at the time of final dissertation defense

2. The student must be the first author on these papers and must be prepared to defend how the papers are based on their own dissertation research.

3. At the discretion of the dissertation committee, up to two of the three papers may have been written, submitted, or published by the student prior to proposal defense if
   a. the student is first author on the paper;
   b. all committee members attest that the student did most of the work and most of the writing of the paper;
   c. the work was completed while the student was enrolled in the PhD program and is approved for inclusion in the dissertation by the committee; and
   d. the dissertation committee unanimously agrees that the papers together represent a single, cohesive research topic.

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[2] For information on determining authorship on papers submitted for publication, students and their dissertation committee members should refer to the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts (URM) guidelines provided by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) or similar guidelines provided by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

4. The dissertation must strictly adhere to University of Rochester Graduate Studies and ProQuest/UMI formatting requirements. In general, this includes writing an Introductory Chapter 1 and a concluding Chapter 5, as described in the thesis manual.

5. Copyright permission from the publishing journal must be obtained in order to use content from already published articles if they are not open access. The student must obtain a waiver from the copyright owner (usually the publisher) and include it as an appendix in the final dissertation. The student should inform the publisher about the intent to include content from the paper in a dissertation prior to signing a copyright agreement for publication.

4.2 Proposal Development and Defense

Successful completion of core coursework (possibly including up to 12 credits of NUR 595), the qualifying exam, and all RA/TA hours is required before the defense of the dissertation proposal.

Proposal Content

The dissertation proposal is a written document that is developed by the student and revised in response to critique by their dissertation advisory committee. The proposal represents a comprehensive description of the student's research project and a plan of action for completing the dissertation. Regardless of the chosen dissertation format (five-chapter or three-paper), the dissertation proposal consists of the following content:

 a. The statement of the problem;
 b. The literature and theoretical orientation, if relevant;
 c. The study methods; and
 d. The analysis plan

For five-chapter dissertations, this content is typically found in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. Students selecting the three-paper option should work closely with their committee to develop a written document that includes the necessary content. For this proposal format, we recommend that you reference the UR's thesis manual prior to writing the proposal, to save time on formatting requirements.

If the 3-paper option is selected, an NRSA proposal might be considered a preliminary version of the first three dissertation chapters and therefore, if committee members agree, an equivalent to the dissertation proposal. Other grant applications may also fulfill the written proposal requirement rather than the traditional Chapters 1, 2, and 3. However, the content specified above (points a, b, c, & d) must be present in the written proposal, whether in grant or another format.

The proposal should be written in the future tense and demonstrate a synthesis and application of

philosophy of science, theory, core courses, cognate courses, and scientific methods in the student's research area. If you've done pilot work, refer to your experiences when describing your planned procedures, and explain which methods will be the same and which will be different. Conclude the proposal with a timeline for completion of the phases of the project and dissertation writing.

The student writes the proposal in close consultation with the primary dissertation advisor, who has the final authority on the content and organization of the proposal.

Oral Proposal Defense

Before a date is planned for the proposal defense, all members of the committee should confirm with the primary dissertation advisor that the proposal is ready to be defended. Members should receive a final draft well in advance of the defense date (at minimum, 2 weeks) so they can make notes and be prepared to discuss that version. Revisions may be made after the defense, as discussed below.

The student, in consultation with committee members, identifies a time for the defense. The PhD Program Director and office requires a minimum of 2 weeks notification and have final approval of the designated time. All SON defenses are held in person, with virtual options available at the discretion of the program director. In-person attendance is required for all committee members and the student; exceptions to this policy must be pre-approved by the program director. Committee members external to the UR may attend remotely. The program office will schedule the room, IT requirements, and send out notifications of the event.

The student and advisor should discuss the procedures for the day of the defense and prepare for them. Proposal defenses usually last 1.5–2 hours; the advisor determines the plan of events, but the usual steps are as follows:

1. The student prepares a formal presentation, usually including PowerPoint slides, to last no more than 30 minutes. Generally, the methods of dissertation research should receive at least half the allotted time. Background literature should be summarized very briefly.

2. At the appointed time, the primary advisor welcomes the attendees and introduces the plan for the time, the committee members, and the student (including highlights from the student's CV)

3. Following introductory remarks are the proposal presentation by the student, a period for questions from attendees other than committee members, and then a closed session for committee members' questions, discussion, and determination of success.

4. If the defense is successful, a signed memo is returned to the PhD Programs office. A proposal may be deemed successful but still include recommended changes or additions.

5. A final copy of the written proposal should be provided for the PhD program office, as

well as to committee members if they wish. Any changes/additions to the proposal, identified by the committee, must be reflected in the final document submitted to the program office.

If the committee deems the proposal not yet satisfactory, revisions may be required before the memo is signed. If major revisions are required, especially if they affect the planned methods, the student may be delayed from starting the research until the revisions are complete. If required revisions are minor, the advisor may allow them to be completed while the student moves forward with the research.

The completed proposal represents a formal plan for successful dissertation completion. Students and advisors should continually discuss expectations for each chapter/paper. Changes significantly impacting the content of the dissertation and/or the timeline for completion should be discussed and approved by the dissertation committee.

4.3 Dissertation Defense Process and Timeline

A detailed guide to defense planning, including a worksheet for determining important deadlines, is provided in the appendix of this handbook.

The process of preparing and submitting your dissertation for defense requires careful planning and attention to detail. Students finalizing their dissertations should communicate with their committee members and the PhD program office early (i.e., at least one semester prior to defense) and often.

The SON adheres to all policies detailed in the University's dissertation manual, which is accessible on the Graduate Education website. Please contact the PhD program office with any policy questions.

Selection of a Chair for the Final Defense

The University requires the nomination of a chair for the final dissertation committee. In the School of Nursing, the chair may be a faculty member within the school but will be outside the candidate's and advisor's defined area of specialty. Dissertation chairs may be chosen from inside or outside of the School of Nursing in accordance with the following criteria:
- the chair has an earned doctorate and is tenured or tenure eligible;
- the chair is uninvolved in the student's and advisor's work;
- the chair is administratively independent from inside committee members (i.e., has minimal influence over committee members' tenure or status); and
- the chair has had prior experience serving on dissertation committees

The role of the chair is to monitor and promote fairness and rigor in the conduct of the defense. The chair's status as a nonmember of the advisor's and student's working group enables distance from previously established judgments on the candidate's work.

When the student, in consultation with their primary advisor, has 3 candidates for chair in mind

and a general idea about when they would like to schedule the defense, their nominations are forwarded to the Program Director for approval 2-3 months prior to intended defense date. The Program Director will initiate the request to the requested /nominated chair. When the external chair is confirmed, the student and primary advisor will be notified.

Pending approval of the Program Director, a memo confirming the establishment of the oral defense committee is sent to the student, committee members, and oral defense chair. Ultimately, committee membership is subject to approval by the University Dean of Graduate Studies.

Formatting

The University has specific formatting guidelines (e.g., title page, margins, pagination, order of front matter, etc.) for PhD dissertations. Those guidelines are found in the thesis manual posted on the Graduate Education website. The SON preferred citation format is APA 7th edition, but students may use other citation formats under the guidance, and with approval, of their dissertation committees. For three-paper dissertations, students may follow the citation guidelines of the publication journals.

Defense Timeline: An Overview

The University has five dates on which PhDs are officially conferred each year, and each conferral date has a corresponding cycle of deadlines for the dissertation defense. Students should work closely with the program office to select a defense date that adheres to the University's PhD calendar and is agreeable to all committee members.

Careful planning is needed when scheduling a defense date. At minimum, students should plan to have completed writing the dissertation a month prior to their desired defense date. Selection of the oral defense chair will ideally be completed 2-3 months prior to target conferral date. Please see the handbook appendix for detailed guidance on defense timing and preparation.

Per UR regulations, committee members must be given at least two weeks to review the dissertation before approving it for defense. If, upon review, any member of the committee does not support the dissertation moving forward for defense, the student must revise the dissertation as per committee recommendation. Committee members are then given an additional two weeks (at minimum) to reevaluate the dissertation. The thesis should also be sent to the Program Director and program administrator at least four weeks prior to scheduled defense date.

The defense timeline can be visualized as follows:
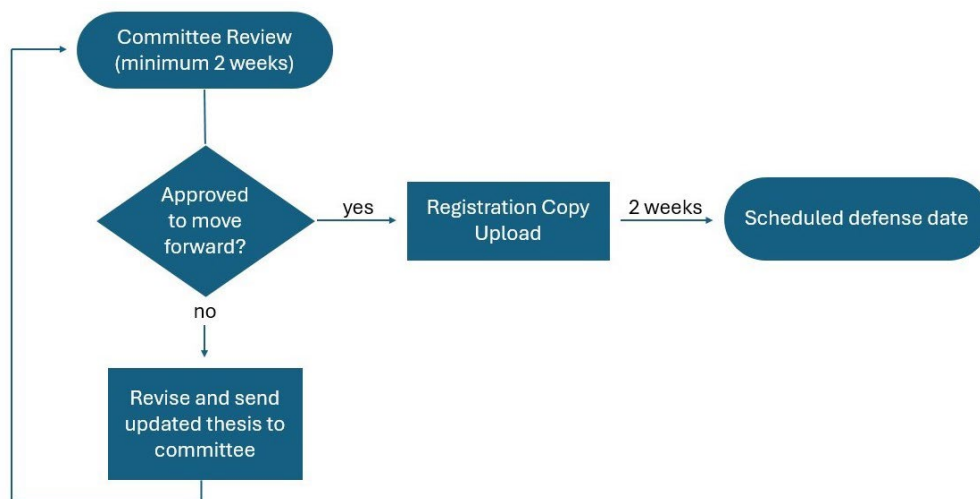
Prior to its final defense, the student's completed dissertation (i.e., the version of the dissertation deemed ready for defense by committee members) must be registered with the Office of the University Dean of Graduate Studies. The registered version of your dissertation (called the registration copy) to be used at the defense is not a draft. Although the examining committee may require revisions after the defense, the dissertation that is uploaded to the PhD completion website for registration for the final defense should be in final form. The Program Director, Senior Associate Dean, SON Dean, University Dean, or appointed oral examination chair may turn back any dissertation that is insufficiently edited or carelessly formatted, postponing the defense. It is in your best interest to produce a polished, carefully edited and well-written document for evaluation by the dissertation defense committee and chair.

A minimum of four weeks prior to the scheduled defense date (and two weeks prior to dissertation registration), the student emails the finalized dissertation to all committee members, the Program Director, and the PhD administrator. The PhD administrator assesses compliance with the University's formatting requirements. For the dissertation to be officially registered, all committee members must confirm that it is ready to proceed to the final defense. Should any committee member request substantial revisions, those revisions must be completed prior to submission of the registration copy. Final approval from all committee members is required to ensure the dissertation is deemed ready for defense.

The PhD program office creates a record on the UR's PhD Completion Site, which includes the student's degree information, past degrees, important contact information, and registration copy of thesis in pdf format. Several offices and individuals need to sign off on the registration record, including the dissertation committee, PhD program office and director, and Graduate Studies office. **The registration copy must be uploaded at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled defense date**. The defense cannot take place until the thesis is officially registered. Students will be notified when their thesis is officially registered. At the time of upload, the student must distribute the registration copy to all committee members (including the external chair) in the file format requested by each member.

Dissertation Defense

Per University graduate policy, the purpose of the oral examination is to ascertain whether the candidate proposed a significant dissertation topic and whether they defended the dissertation adequately, by offering appropriate and effective arguments and by marshaling relevant and convincing evidence. The presentation and defense of a significant dissertation is the capstone of the work for the PhD degree.

The student is responsible for identifying a defense time (plan for a 2-hour session) that works for all members of the defense committee, including the oral defense chair. The student then notifies the program director, who approves the time. From there, the program office books the defense location and sends invitations to SON attendees. All SON defenses are held in person, with virtual options available at the discretion of the program director. In-person attendance is required for all committee members and the student; exceptions to this policy must be pre-approved by the program director.

The defense generally begins with an introduction of all committee members and the student. As with the proposal defense, the final defense is a public presentation of approximately 30 minutes (questions other than those from committee members may or may not be allowed), after which all but committee members are excused.

The committee members, led by the appointed chair, then conduct the final examination, usually lasting an hour but occasionally longer.

After the Defense

After a successful defense, you will receive a "Successful PhD Defense Notification" email from the Office of University Graduate Studies. Your committee, the Program Director, and/or Graduate Studies may recommend revisions to your dissertation; those changes must be incorporated into the final version of your dissertation.

You will be instructed to log in to the PhD Candidate Processing system to access post-defense instructions and forms. You will be advised to read all documents carefully and respond as requested. All steps must be completed as described in order to fulfill the requirements for the PhD degree. Contact the PhD program office to confirm the date by which all steps must be complete to receive your degree at the next conferral date, as well as to avoid having to register for the next semester.

You will receive a final email confirmation from Graduate Studies when all final materials have been received and accepted.

4.4 Conferral, Commencement, and Alumni Updates

The University policy is not to use the PhD designation after your name until after the Board of Trustees has formally awarded the degree. The degree is awarded by the Trustees at their next

meeting after the defense (August, October, March, May, or December). After that date, the PhD credential may be used.

Commencement involves three ceremonies: a university-wide graduation ceremony; a university-wide doctoral ceremony, in which graduates are hooded and receive diploma covers; and SON ceremony in which PhD graduates are presented and acknowledged. You are invited, but not required, to attend all three ceremonies. Diplomas are mailed directly to students after commencement.

After graduation, students will vacate their assigned office and return all keys and other SON-assigned equipment. Please keep the PhD Programs office informed of your contact information and current position. Alumni achievements are critically important indicators of the effectiveness and quality of the PhD program. We will contact you periodically for your evaluative comments about the program as well as your news.

The University of Rochester provides several benefits and services to its alumni, including the creation of a UR alumni email address. Alumni also have access to on-campus libraries, their respective collections, and several premium library databases through the Alumni Library Gateway. Visit the alumni benefits website for more information.

SECTION V. ADVISING, EVALUATION, AND REGISTRATION POLICIES

5.1 Good Academic Standing and Progression Through the Program

Unless specified otherwise, all policies and procedures for both the Master's program and the PhD program apply to the MS (NP Specialties)/PhD and MS (MNE)/PhD combined programs.

Professional and Academic Honesty

Students are obligated to know the expectations for academic integrity upon entry into the program and will be held to these expectations in all academic activities. Suspected violations will be reported to a review panel, and serious penalties will be assessed for violations of these expectations. Please become familiar with this section of the School of Nursing Student Handbook

Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

University of Rochester faculty, students, post-PhD fellows, residents and staff must complete and sign forms indicating compliance with the University conflict of interest policy. This will ordinarily be completed once a year at fall registration. Forms are kept in a confidential file and attached when a student submits a research proposal. University policy and guidelines are available at https://rochester.edu/orpa/compliance/#fcoi

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Given the rapidly changing nature of recommendations of the use of artificial intelligence (AI), students are expected to familiarize themselves with the University's guidelines for the use of generative AI in education, as well as graduate regulations regarding the use of AI in dissertation research (see Graduate Regulations).

Special Considerations for Part-Time Students

The PhD program adheres to both University-wide graduate regulations as well as SON-specific policies regarding part-time study. Part-time students are subject to the following restrictions:

1. a minimum of two years (four consecutive semesters) in residence while enrolled as a part-time student is required

2. the minimum registration will be two courses per semester, each carrying at least three credit hours, until all coursework is completed

3. a student receiving grades lower than B (or S) in more than one-quarter of the courses for a given academic year may not be permitted to continue in the part-time program.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

University policies regarding graduate students' grades can be found in its published [Regulations and University Policies Concerning Graduates Studies](). Unsatisfactory grades and/or failure to pass the PhD Qualifying Examination are both examples of unsatisfactory academic progress.

Academic alerts are issued by faculty to provide formal, written, proactive feedback to a student when required. Through this notification students are alerted that additional efforts may be required to be successful in a course or program.

For SON graduate students, a final grade of B- or higher is considered satisfactory. If a student attains a WE (withdraw failing) grade in a course, this is considered an unsatisfactory final course grade. Unsatisfactory academic progress may be grounds for loss of federal, state, and/or institutional aid. If a student receives an unsatisfactory final grade in a required course, the PhD Subcommittee will make a recommendation to the Student Affairs Committee to either
   a. place the student on academic probation and allow the student to repeat the course (on a space available basis);
   b. temporarily suspend the student from the program; or
   c. separate the student from the University of Rochester

Students placed on probation will be notified by an official letter that outlines required next steps. Probationary status will be removed when students has fulfilled all items as outlined in the probation letter and the Student Affairs Committee recommends that probationary status be discontinued.

MS/PhD and MNE/PhD students are subject to MS policy requirements for the MS courses in the curriculum, and questionable academic performance is reviewed by all applicable program subcommittees. Please see the [SON Student Handbook]() for more detail on MS grading policy.

Degree Time Limits and Extensions

Per [University policy](), students have 7 calendar years after entry with a bachelor's degree or 6 years after entry with a master's degree to complete the PhD program. This time limit applies regardless of whether they have been enrolled full-time or part-time or have taken leaves of absence. Students readmitted after withdrawal are handled on an individual basis.

If the dissertation is not defended by the end of the final allotted year, a request for an extension of time to complete the program must be submitted to the PhD Programs Director by the student with supporting comments by the student and advisor. Forms to request an extension are available in the PhD program Box folder (see handbook appendix for link). Requests will be made prior to the extension occurring and with sufficient time for the PhD Subcommittee to review (e.g., early May if needed for September).

All requests for extension must be approved by the PhD Subcommittee. The approved extension duration will vary depending on the individual student's situation and may be limited to a few

months. In general, extension status will not be granted to students who have not yet defended their dissertation proposal, except in the case of extenuating circumstances. Requests for additional extensions are contingent on continuous progress toward degree completion. Failure to meet identified outcomes at established timeframes can be (and has been) cause for separation from the program. Requests for extensions beyond 12 years must be approved by the university dean of graduate studies. **Please note that extension status has consequences for tuition waivers; see Section 6.2 for more information.**

Leaves of Absence and Withdrawals

Leaves of absence (without stipend support) may be granted, for personal or professional reasons, for a maximum of two semesters. If a student does not foresee being able to return to the program within one year, voluntary withdrawal (see below) is the better option. As noted above, time spent on a leave of absence counts toward the time limit for completion of the program.

Students should discuss a plan to take a leave of absence with their advisor and then the program director. A leave of absence requires completion of a Leave of Absence Request form (available on SON website) as well as signature of the PhD Program Director and the student's advisor(s). Students on LOA are not eligible for student health insurance and should explore the effects of LOA status on federal aid and/or loan deferment.

Students returning from leave must notify the program director in writing as well as submit a return form to the SON registrar (see handbook appendix). In general, notification of return needs to occur by March 1st for the fall semester and/or October 1st for the spring semester.

Voluntary withdrawal is an appropriate action if a student's plans change, or the student feels unable to achieve satisfactory performance, has exhausted the option for a leave of absence, or does not foresee being able to return to satisfactory performance within one year. The student may reapply to the program after withdrawal. The application for re-admission will be judged with the student's prior academic performance taken into account.

Involuntary withdrawal, or administrative separation, may be incurred as a result of persistent failure to achieve satisfactory academic performance or progression based on program requirements listed above, failure to pass the qualifying exam for the second time, or as a result of a serious violation of School or University policy. Please refer to the University Graduate Regulations and Policies and the University Leave of Absence and Withdrawal Policy for further information.

5.2 Faculty Advisors and Program Planning

The PhD Program Director assigns an academic advisor to each student after they accept admission into the program. Students meet regularly (at minimum, every 2 weeks is recommended) with their advisors to:

    a. Formulate a degree plan;
    b. Create and update annually an Individual Development Plan (IDP);
    c. Discuss ongoing academic progress and the development of dissertation research work;
    d. Seek out enrichment opportunities such as interdisciplinary seminars, conferences, and research collaborations;
    e. Identify suitable RA and TA opportunities; and
    f. Utilize resources available for academic and personal support

It is the student's responsibility to maintain regular contact with their advisor and to be accountable for their own progress and success in the program. Students and advisors may use Academic Advising Agreements outlining program expectations to ensure positive progression toward their goals.

If a student desires a change in advisor during the program, or the advisor leaves the School or becomes unable to continue, the student should discuss alternatives with the current advisor and with the PhD Programs Director, who makes the final decision.

5.3 Individual Development Plans and Annual Progress Reports

Students are required to create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in consultation with their advisors. The IDP helps to guide and organize career development and training goals. The IDP should map out the general career path the student wants to take, specify short- and long-term goals, and maximize training opportunities to meet individual development needs. Since needs and goals evolve over time, the IDP is reviewed and revised at least once a year, via self-assessment by the student and comments from the advisor. The IDP form can be found in the program office Box folder (see handbook appendix for link).

At the end of each spring semester, all students submit to the PhD Programs office:

- a current Curriculum Vitae and
- An annual progress report, containing advisor comments and signature, to be attached as an addendum to the IDP

5.4 Registration Procedures and Requirements

Degree Plans

A degree plan is developed in conjunction with the advisor (or by the program office) before the first semester of study and registered in SONdb, the School of Nursing's internal academic affairs database. Any changes to the degree plan must be updated each semester prior to registration, approved by advisor and Program Director, and updated in SONdb. Please notify the program office of any such changes or updates (e.g., course numbers and names of cognates, once identified).

Course Registration

The University of Rochester requires continuous enrollment each fall and spring semester from matriculation through completion. Course registration takes place via UR Student (see handbook appendix for link) in November for the spring semester, in April for the summer semester, and in July for the fall semester. Students registering for non-SON courses (e.g., cognates) need to email the SON registrar at sonregistrar@urmc.rochester.edu to be manually enrolled.

Full-time status requires registration for 9 or more credits per semester and/or registration for NUR 999. Part-time status requires registration for 6 credits or more per semester and/or registration for NUR 995. Continuous registration in NUR 590 is required from the semester following completion of NUR 514 through the dissertation proposal defense.

Grading System

Per the University's Graduate Regulations and Policies, grades for graduate students are reported through one of two systems. One is A (excellent), A–, B+, B (good), B–, C (poor), and E (failure). The other is S (satisfactory) and E (failure). The School of Nursing uses the following numeric grading scale for graduate programs:

A	93 – 100
A-	90 – 92
B+	87 – 89
B	83 – 86
B-	80 – 82
C	70 – 79
E	< 70

Incomplete Grades (see also SON Student Handbook)

Students can request an extension of time to complete course requirements from the course instructor. The request must be initiated by the student prior to the assignment deadlines. The incomplete grade cannot be used as a substitute for a failing grade when the student is doing

unsatisfactory work. Granting of an Incomplete Contract is at the discretion of the course instructor. Contracts are initiated by course faculty via the electronic incomplete Contract System (see handbook appendix). If the student anticipates being unable to meet a previously negotiated extension date, the instructor must be notified. With instructor approval, incomplete contracts may be updated to extend the final deadline. Typically, incomplete course work must be completed by the end of the following semester. Incomplete grades must be resolved before a student can complete program milestones (e.g., qualifying examination, proposal defense, etc.).

Special Course (NUR 591, 595, and 995/999) Registration and Grading

Independent studies (NUR 591) must be approved by both the Program Director and the Senior Associate Dean for Research prior to the start of the semester. Students should submit an Independent Study Form (see handbook appendix for link) for all necessary signatures in order to register for NUR 591. Independent studies are graded according to the criteria detailed in the approval form.

To ensure satisfactory progress in NUR 595, 995, or 999, each semester students and advisors must submit a contract outlining goals for the semester (students registered for both NUR 595 and 995/999 complete only one contract). This contract must be signed by both student and advisor and submitted to the PhD program office **prior to the start of the semester**.

The goals set by advisor and student may be modified by mutual agreement, but absence of progress by mid-semester will warrant an Academic Alert, indicating a risk of failure. "Incomplete" grades for NUR 995 or 999 may be issued only when illness or other unforeseeable events prevent completion of the work. Employment responsibilities are not sufficient reason for a grade of "Incomplete." If work demands are a significant impediment to progress, a Leave of Absence should be considered. An E grade (failure) is treated as are other unsatisfactory grades, academic probation or with dismissal from the program.

SECTION VI. FUNDING SUPPORT

Questions about financial matters should be directed to the PhD program office, which can then answer or direct those questions to the appropriate departments or offices.

6.1 Important Tax Information

In general, stipends and reimbursements paid by the University are reported to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Funds used for tuition, fees, books, and supplies can be subtracted from reported income on tax returns, but funds used for cost-of-living expenses, research, and travel are taxable. Details can be found on the IRS website.

6.2 Tuition

The School of Nursing provides tuition waivers for PhD and MS-PhD students for required courses in both the master's (credit hours may vary) and PhD programs (up to 60 credit hours) for full-time students. Continuation of tuition support is dependent upon maintaining good academic standing full-time enrollment as well as meeting program milestones (RA/TA hours, qualifying examination, etc.) in a timely manner.

Dropping, withdrawing from, or failing a course has implications for students' stipend support and tuition waiver; consult the SON student handbook and/or program director for further guidance. The SON will not cover tuition costs for credits registered after the 6 years allotted for completion of the PhD (7 years for MS-PhD). Students will be responsible for tuition costs beyond that point.

Students (both full-time and part-time) who are eligible for employee tuition benefits are expected to use these benefits toward tuition costs. Please notify the PhD Programs office of eligibility or loss of eligibility for this benefit. UR tuition benefits can cover only one semester of non-credit NUR 995 or 999 fees. Students funded under a National Research Service Awards (NRSA) can use the grant's tuition funds to pay NUR 995/999 fees.

UR employees should consult the website for UR employee tuition benefits for more information. Others should refer to their respective employers' tuition benefit policies.

6.3 Stipends

Full-time PhD and combined Master's/PhD program students are eligible for a cost-of-living stipend for 4 years. Continuation of stipend support is dependent upon maintaining good academic standing full-time enrollment as well as meeting program milestones (RA/TA hours, qualifying examination, etc.) in a timely manner. Students receiving stipends are strongly encouraged to:

- Devote full-time effort to the program;
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress;
- Defend the dissertation proposal by the end of the third year of study

Students who do not meet these expectations may be placing future/continuing stipend support in jeopardy. Stipend support may not be provided to students who are re-matriculated or who enter part-time and then decide to become full-time.

Since the main goal is to enhance recruitment of top-quality applicants who will progress to the PhD within 4 years (MS/PhD and MNE/PhD within 5 years) or soon thereafter, stipend support is not open to students who are re-matriculated or who enter part-time and then decide to become full-time.

Stipends will be verified by letter to the students, and checks may be directly deposited into the student's account or picked up from the UR Payroll Office.

6.4 Health Insurance and Childcare Grants

As announced in August 2022, The University has expanded single-payer health insurance coverage to all full-time PhD students across the institution. Student health insurance is administered through University Health Service (UHS). Under this policy, students enroll in the student health insurance plan, and their health insurance fees are waived by the SON and the bursar's office. Please consult the Graduate Education website for enrollment instructions and further information.

In August 2023, the University launched a pilot childcare grant program for full-time PhD students on University appointments, who are parents of children, newborn through age 6 ("student-parents"). The objective of this program is to provide some financial assistance to Rochester PhD students with childcare expenses. More information about the grant program, including eligibility requirements, can be found here.

6.5 Internal Awards and Fellowships

The Loretta C. Ford Fellowship is awarded to PhD student with an RN license by the PhD Program Director. It was established in 1987 in honor of the School's first dean, Loretta C. Ford, RN, EdD, PNP, FAAN, FAANP, who is internationally renowned as a practitioner, teacher, and scholar and the co-creator, with Henry Silver, MD, of the nurse practitioner role. The Ford Fellowship is awarded to a nursing student demonstrating high potential for academic and professional success. The recipient is recognized at the fall Convocation.

The Jill Thayer Dissertation Award is presented to a PhD candidate at the School of Nursing or a School of Nursing faculty member who is pursuing a doctorate elsewhere. The purpose of the award is to support dissertation research in the area of nursing practice or education as it relates to personalizing/humanizing either of those vital encounters. Students whose proposals have been defended and approved by the student's PhD committee are eligible. The award is presented each fall at Convocation. This cash award is to be used for dissertation research expenses.

The Katharine Donohoe PhD Student Scholarly Practitioner Award, created in 1999, is named in honor of Katharine Donohoe, a PhD candidate, clinician, and clinical faculty member internationally known for her practice, research, and educational contributions to the care of patients with neurological diseases, especially multiple sclerosis. This award recognizes PhD students, prepared as nurse practitioners, who have undertaken research focused on improving the well-being of the population served in their practice roles. The student's performance will exemplify clinical excellence, outstanding scholarship, and professional leadership. The award is presented each Fall at Convocation.

Students across the University may apply for **Susan B. Anthony Dissertation Awards**, research grants of up to $1000 which are awarded to the University of Rochester PhD candidates having completed (or nearly completed) dissertation research related to women's and/or gender studies.

Many **additional opportunities** supporting research activities are available across the University and Medical Center. For example, the UR Clinical & Translational Science Institute posts funding opportunities on its website. The SON website also contains information re: outside funding, and the University manages a searchable database of funding opportunities.

6.6 External Funding and Awards

Examples of External Funding/Awards

The PhD program strongly supports and facilitates student applications for a wide range of funding for PhD study and research. These include both scholarship and research funding applications. Funding sources for our students have included: the National Institutes of Health, Nurses Educational Funds, Inc.; Sigma Theta Tau International (and local chapters); nursing specialty organizations such as the Oncology Nursing Society; and non-profit organizations such

as the American Cancer Society.

Federal funding is a major milestone for a new researcher. The Individual National Research Service Award (NRSA) F31 training grant award provides tuition support, funds for research and scholarly expenses, and a stipend. Applications may be submitted from the point of acceptance into the PhD program through the start of the final year (at least 9 months of funding must be requested). All students who are able to pursue full-time study and are eligible for these awards are encouraged to apply.

You are encouraged to contact the Harriet J. Kitzman Center for Research Support (CRS) to determine funding opportunities in your area of research interest and for assistance in formatting and preparing grant applications. See Section 7.2 of this handbook for more information.

External Funding/Awards Application Process

All applications for external funding must adhere to School of Nursing and University sign-off procedures. The PhD program director and Center for Research Support (CRS) should be notified of intent to apply for external funding as early as possible. Students should submit a [Notice of Intent (NOI) form](#) as soon as they decide to apply for funding and a minimum of 30 days prior to the application deadline. An organizational meeting for the student and faculty sponsor is scheduled with the CRS staff to review potential support and required sign-off procedures. Faculty sponsors and/or mentors must approve students' proposals __before__ they are submitted to the CRS.

Conflicts of Interest (COI): students submitting grant proposals must disclose their outside financial interests to the University. To do, so, visit the [URMC Conflict of Interest Reporting website](#) and click on "Request Access" in the top right corner. After completing the request form, students will receive further instructions from a COI administrator via email. Verification of COI disclosures is made at the time of proposal sign-off.

Intellectual Property Agreements: Students (graduate and undergraduate) who participate in any manner in a sponsored research project must sign an Intellectual Property Agreement (IPA) when hired or when filing for sponsor support. Students should contact the Center for Research Support for guidance in completing this form. [UR intellectual property policies](#) may be found online.

UR Signoff for External Proposals: a UR signoff form must be completed by SON faculty/students before the submission of any proposal for external funding. Students should contact the Center for Research Support for guidance in completing the sign-off forms. It is important to allow at least 48 hours for completion of this process.

When PhD students receive funds from agencies, foundations, or associations in support of their research, the funds are disbursed through the SON research office (CRS). University policies and procedures are strictly observed because the University is subject to strict accounting regulations as a recipient of federal funds.

When a student has received acknowledgement that their proposal has been approved for funding, the first step is to provide a copy of this notification to the CRS. Upon receipt of this

notification, the CRS will request that a grant account be established; both the CRS and the student will receive documentation of the established account. At that time, a meeting is scheduled between the student, faculty advisor, CRS administrator, and staff accountant assigned to this award to review and discuss University financial policies and procedures.

All research materials must be purchased through selected University vendors using established paperwork and forms and must be countersigned by the administrator for CRS. If a student makes a purchase or commitment prior to the administrator's review and signature, or fails to follow the University's established procedure, the student may be held liable for that expense.

When transactions involve hiring personnel, at least one month's lead time before the process of hiring can begin may be required for the preparation and approval of appropriate paperwork, which will confirm an appointment and initiate paychecks to be processed by other divisions within the University.

The student will receive monthly financial ledger reports, which reflect expenses to date, along with a cover sheet. The student is required to review the ledger for accuracy of the expenses and then sign and return the cover sheet indicating that the expenses listed on the ledger are accurate or indicating any errors. This procedure is important as it meets many audit requirements. In addition, it is the student's responsibility to stay within the established budget.

Most research projects are awarded for a specific time period. When an award is reaching the expiration date, the student will be notified by the CRS administrator and/or the staff accountant that the account is about to expire unless an official extension from the funding agency is requested. If funds remain in the account and an extension is permitted by the funder, the student is responsible for submitting a request for extension in a timely fashion. This request should be coordinated through the CRS Administrator's office and like the initial grant proposal is co-signed by the Office of Project and Research Administration (ORPA).

All questions or concerns regarding the spending of research dollars, process to be utilized, or financial status should be reviewed with the Administrator for CRS.

6.7 Travel Funding for Scholarly Work

The School of Nursing supports and encourages student participation in professional meetings. Students in good academic standing who are presenting a paper or a poster as first author may submit a request for travel funding. The program director reviews and decides on funding based on annual budget allocation. The budget is reviewed annually, and available funding may vary. Contact the program director when submitting a first-author abstract so that potential funding needs can be planned in advance.

The Eastern Nursing Research Society (ENRS) Is the regional nursing research association for New England and the mid-Atlantic states. ENRS holds an annual research conference in Spring, which includes events and awards oriented to PhD students. Attendance and presentation each year is an outstanding scholarly opportunity for School of Nursing PhD students and is recommended. Visit www.enrs-go.org for more information.

The Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science (https://www.nursingscience.org/home) is the research policy and facilitation arm for the American Academy of Nursing. Student presentation at the bi-annual State of the Science Congress on Nursing Research in September is encouraged. Travel budget allocation for these conferences is determined annually and is prioritized for students with first author abstracts.

Approval and Reimbursement Policies

Travel funding must be pre-approved by both the PhD Program Director and the Senior Associate Dean for Research a minimum of 30 days prior to traveling. Do **<u>not</u>** make any travel arrangements without first consulting the program office. All travel arrangements must be made through a University-approved vendor with program support.

Student travel policies and procedures are documented in detail in the program office Box file. A few important stipulations:

- Travel funding must be pre-approved by both the PhD Program Director and the Senior Associate Dean for Research a minimum of 30 days prior to traveling
- Registration fees and airfare need to be arranged in advance by the SON. Please take advantage of any "early bird" discounts
- Printing costs for posters are also covered by the SON, but extra costs associated with rush orders will not be supported. Templates for SON-branded poster presentations may be found on the URMC intranet (VPN access required if accessing off campus)
- Students' posters should include acknowledgement that support was received from the University of Rochester School of Nursing
- Other travel expenses (hotel, parking, etc.) are to be paid out-of-pocket by students and reimbursed upon their return

No more than 30 days after returning from travel, students should contact the program office and provide receipts for expenses incurred. Please allow several weeks for reimbursement.

Please note that University policies for travel are updated frequently; students should consult with the program office to keep abreast of any recent changes.

SECTION VII. SCHOLARLY ENGAGEMENT

7.1 The Importance of Scholarly Productivity

The most significant professional contributions of PhD-prepared individuals are the results of their scholarly work, disseminated in presentations and publications, which become part of the scientific foundation for clinical practice. Typically, the work is first presented at research conferences to gather feedback from scholarly peers and then submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Funding for research and scholarship is also highly valued; funding enables the work to be completed and it is both a reflection of competitive selection through a peer-review process and a recognition of the importance and quality of the work. Scholarly productivity of students during and after completion of the program is one of the main measures of quality in PhD programs and is carefully tracked by the SON.

A curriculum vitae, or CV, is a scholar's comprehensive record of their scholarly work and takes the place of a resume. During the PhD program, students should begin building their CVs and establishing track records as active scholars. A link to a CV template is included in this handbook's appendix.

The main scholarly activities that students should focus on are research-focused presentations, publications, and grant applications. RA experiences offer ideal opportunities to contribute to ongoing faculty research and provide collaborative scholarship opportunities. Students also are encouraged to prepare presentations and manuscripts for publication from their course assignments, including integrative literature reviews, theoretical analyses, and papers related to research methods. Faculty can provide guidance as to which work is suitable for further development into an abstract for presentation or manuscript for publication.

Scholarship and/or grant funding can be sought for support of PhD study as well as for completion of dissertation research. As described in Section 6 of this handbook, grant funding is awarded by professional associations, internal SON and UR awards, charitable foundations, local organizations such as churches and community groups, national organizations, and the offices and institutes of NIH. Even small awards are considered important achievements for PhD students.

Communication with Program Director and Office

Communicate early and often with the program director and office whenever you are considering submitting an application for scholarship or research support (internal or external). In addition to your advisor, we can provide guidance on resources and policies.

Please also communicate (early and often) about abstract or manuscript submission; we need to know both about submissions and notification decisions. This information helps us to allocate budgets for travel funding support.

Finally, please communicate all notifications of scholarships, awards, abstract acceptance, and/or

publications. The PhD program office keeps track of students' scholarly achievements for program-evaluation purposes. We also want to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of PhD students by sharing their successes with the SON community.

7.2 Harriet J. Kitzman Center for Research Support (CRS)

The purposes of the Harriet J. Kitzman Center for Research Support are to:

- Facilitate the research and scholarly development of the School of Nursing faculty and their intra and interdisciplinary collaborators.
- Provide training opportunities for pre and postdoctoral fellows in all phases of the research process.
- Advance research dissemination and evidence-based practice.
- Provide support to the Centers of Excellence.

All students considering submitting a grant proposal must work with their **advisor and **program** director for approval and completion of the Notice of Intent to Submit (NOI). Please ask your advisor to download the appropriate form from the [SON Intranet](#). Please include approval emails from primary advisor and program director with your NOI.

The CRS is comprised of two groups, one for administrative, proposal, and financial support, and the other for research facilitation.

Administrative, Proposal, and Financial Support Group

The goal of this group is to provide support to faculty and doctoral students' research goals by providing general administrative support for grant submissions, working closely on the preparation of grant proposals (especially budgeting and regulatory issues), and providing oversight of post-award financial management.

- **Grant Proposal Submission**: scientific critique of proposals; mock NIH-style reviews; budget development and review; biographical sketch (maintain); other support (maintenance); assistance with reference software; boilerplate documentation; graphic support (table, charts, models), electronic submission and facilitation of process.

- **Pre and Post Award Research Management**: financial management; interpretation of federal regulations and guidelines; liaison with external agencies and internal departments; assist with non-competing renewal preparation and provide certified grant administrator.

Research Facilitation Group

In collaboration with students' advisors, the SON offers consultation with the research facilitation group (RFG). These are a comprehensive, vertically integrated set of services designed to speed research development by making experts and resources readily accessible to the investigator at each phase of the research process.

- **Consultation Design**: mentorship, statistical consultation, sample size determination, design and methods, proposal development, budget operationalization.

- **Project Management**: recruitment, IRB support, management of Information system (MIS)

- **Technical Support**: instrument development, database design, data management/processing, computer-assisted data gathering (e.g., recap), online data collection, development of observational coding systems, variable creation, data sharing plans, and psychometric evaluation.

- **Data Gathering**: interviewer training, data collection, focus groups.

Consultation is available upon request to PhD students accompanied by their advisor. The administrative, proposal, and financial support group needs to be involved with any and all external grant submissions. Contact the CRS for more information or to schedule an appointment.

7.3 Required Certifications and Approvals

HSPP Certification

To be eligible to conduct or work on research as a member of URMC, students must be certified as having received training on the protection of human research participants. The University of Rochester has two programs that are available to investigators: Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) for research considered greater than minimal risk, and Ethical Principles in Research Program (ERPR)for research considered minimal risk.

PhD students must complete the HSPP program and provide a copy of the certification letter to the PhD Program Office by the start of their 2nd semester. The ERPR program is not acceptable for this requirement.

Certification and recertification (every 3 years) involves completion of a series of short online refresher modules with a brief quiz after each module.

ORCID

An Open Research and Contributor ID (ORCID) is a unique digital code that identifies researchers and their scholarly activities. The University of Rochester is one of many ORCID member organizations. UR faculty are required to create an ORCID, and PhD students are asked to complete by end of first semester. An ORCID can be created (at no charge) at https://orcid.lib.rochester.edu/

Institutional Review Board Approval for Research

Before or after the proposal defense, students must obtain Institutional Review Board approval prior to conducting any research involving human or animal subjects. The application is submitted electronically with the advisor as PI and student as project coordinator. The UR's review board is called the Research Subjects Review Board, or RSRB. The RSRB website contains all the information required to obtain approval for the conduct of research involving human subjects, as well as other guidelines and links. Guidelines for the protection of animal subjects may be found at the UR's Committee on Animal Resources (UCAR) website.

All RSRB or UCAR applications for Research Review must have internal review for scientific merit before submission, using the following process:

1. Reformat the pilot proposal or dissertation proposal as a research protocol per RSRB instructions. Templates are available for protocol development on the RSRB website. Be sure to clearly indicate when the "project coordinator" or "student researcher" is acting and when the PI (advisor) is referred to.

Before final submission, an internal review is required:

2. Doctoral students' RSRB protocols may be reviewed by a member of their committee, excluding the primary advisor (who is officially the PI for the study). If the PI (primary dissertation advisor) wants another member of the committee to perform the review, the PI may directly approach and ask an eligible faculty member to perform the review.
   a. Only one (1) SON scientific review per protocol is necessary.
   b. If the protocol requires scientific review by another URMC committee, it will be determined by the primary faculty advisor (PI), who will explain the necessary procedures to the student.
   c. Eligible reviewers must be doctorally prepared with HSPP or EPRP certification.
   d. They must also be SON faculty (full-time or part-time; tenure-track or clinical).
   e. Reviewers may not include study co-investigators, consultants, or the Senior Associate Dean for Research.

3. Prepare consent forms and recruitment documents, which require RSRB approval

4. Complete the online RSRB application, using the same language as in the protocol whenever possible to avoid confusion. Upload the final protocol and other materials. Do not select "this application is complete" until the advisor/PI reviews it, and do not submit the application.

   a. The primary dissertation advisor should be listed as the official Principal Investigator (PI) on the application form, and the student should be listed as the study coordinator, in order to receive all communications from the RSRB.
   b. The advisor must carefully review the application and take responsibility for the ethical conduct of the research.

5. The advisor as PI electronically submits the RSRB electronic application.

6. RSRB emails the School of Nursing faculty member responsible for verifying scientific merit review that the application has been received and is ready for scientific merit signoff.

7. If the protocol and scientific merit form(s) are satisfactory, the RSRB verification will be signed off electronically by the SON designated faculty member and the review of the application then begins.

RSRB approval can take well over a month. Students should plan ahead for this likelihood and work with their advisors to respond promptly to all requests for information and clarification. Students can check the RSRB application website to see the current status of the protocol review.

7.4 Authorship and Publication Best Practices

Acknowledgements on Student-Authored Publications

Manuscripts on which the author is identified as a UR student must be discussed with and reviewed by a faculty member prior to submission. When the results of the dissertation are published, the primary advisor and possibly other committee members are likely to have made contributions that warrant authorship and should at minimum be noted in the acknowledgments.

Students whose work is supported by NIH funding (or other grant funding), either to themselves or mentors, must acknowledge that support using NIH-approved language, and notify the publisher on submission. They must also ensure that the work is listed in the federal public access source according to federal requirements.

Co-Authorship with Faculty Publications

All individuals contributing to a manuscript for publication should be acknowledged. Major conceptual and writing contributions must be recognized by inclusion of the individual's name as an author. For research publications, substantial input to the formulation of the problem, creation of the design or intervention protocol, organization and conduct of the analyses, or interpretation of the results; or writing of a major portion of the publication constitute such contributions.

When the work is originated by the student and the development of the manuscript has been led by the student, and when the focus of a publication is a student's original thesis work, the student should be listed as first author. Students may be sole authors on publications developed independently if faculty contributions do not reach the level of authorship based on the criteria above. However, all work must be reviewed and approved by a faculty member prior to submission as it is from a University of Rochester student.

Accepting authorship for a publication means accepting responsibility for the accuracy, originality, proper acknowledgement, and ethical implications of the content of the publication. Other contributions to the conduct of the work being described in the publication do not necessarily warrant authorship but should be acknowledged in the text or a footnote. Such contributions may include literature searches; data collection, coding or entry; recruiting participants; or running requested analyses.[3]

Publication of Work Involving URMC Staff or Clinical Data

Papers, posters, or presentations in which URMC staff have served as authors or research participants, in which protocols or clinical data including program evaluation data are presented, or in which SMH or URMC is identified must be reviewed by the Director of Nursing Research of SMH before submission for presentation or publication.

7.5 Learning Enhancement Opportunities

Events Sponsored by the SON

All doctoral students are strongly encouraged to attend oral proposal defenses and dissertation defenses. The SON sponsors many research-related events specifically designed for faulty and PhD student interaction. PhD students are strongly encouraged to attend these events as part of their scholarly development. Notices are distributed by email.

Seminars and Presentations Throughout the University and URMC

Research presentations and interest groups can be found throughout the University and Medical Center, and PhD students are welcome at most of these. Advisors and faculty can direct students

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[3] See, for example, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' authorship recommendations

to events on topics of interest.

Professional Organizations

Involvement in professional organizations and service groups is also part of scholarly development. Your advisor can direct you to local and national organizations that may enhance your learning and may also benefit from your engagement and expertise.

APPENDIX: IMPORTANT FORMS AND RESOURCES

University- and SON-Wide Policies

- SON Guidelines Regarding Final Dissertation Defenses

- [UR Graduate Student Regulations and Policies](#)

- [SON Student Handbook](#)

Qualifying Examination Rubric

[SON PhD Box Folder](#) (access granted by PhD program office)
- Sample degree plans
- Advising and progress report forms
- Special course registration forms
- TA and RA forms
- Travel policies and forms
- Checklists for required administrative documents and deadlines
- Links to University resources and support services

[UR Graduate Education PhD Completion Website](#)

SON PhD Program

Process Guidelines Regarding Final Dissertation Defenses

Note: This document is meant to supplement PhD Program Handbook content regarding the dissertation process. Please refer to Section IV of the handbook for more information.

Introduction

The University has five dates on which PhDs are officially conferred each year: March, May, August, October, and December. Each conferral date has a corresponding cycle of deadlines for the dissertation defense.

Careful planning is needed when scheduling a defense date. At minimum, students should plan to have completed writing the dissertation a month prior to their desired defense date. The timeline from producing a fully written dissertation to final degree conferral can be visualized as follows:
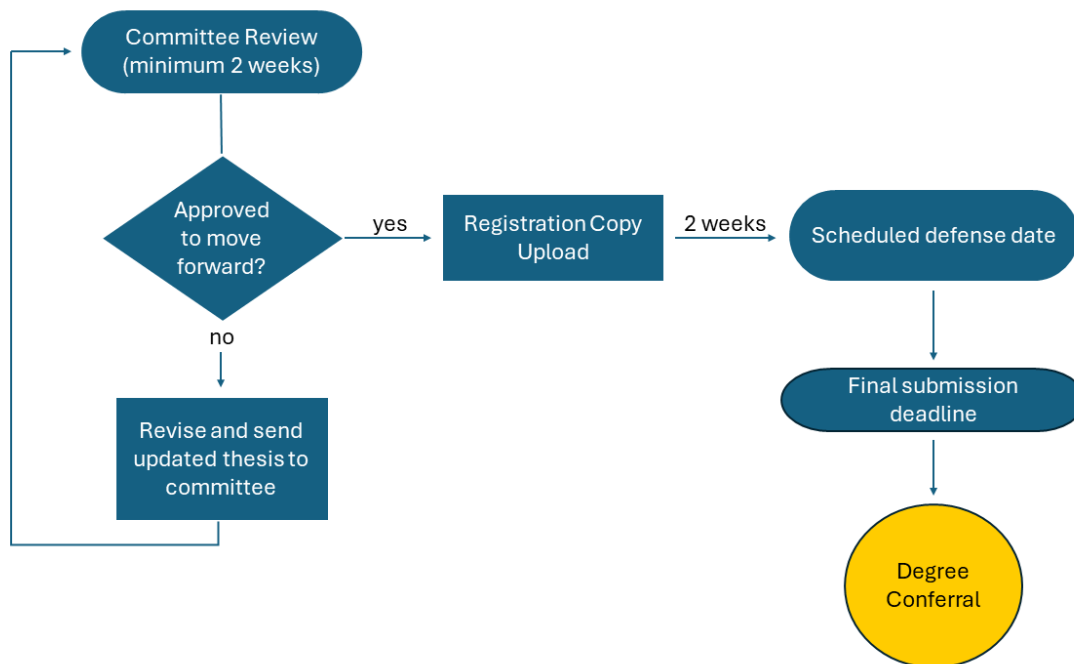
This document provides detailed information on each of the milestones associated with dissertation defense and degree conferral. An appendix includes a checklist of tasks/deadlines and a defense scheduling worksheet to assist students in planning.

Selection of Oral Defense Chair

Timeline: 2-3 months prior to target conferral date

The University requires the nomination of a chair for the final dissertation committee. In the School of Nursing, the chair may be a faculty member within that school but will be outside the candidate's and advisor's defined area of specialty. Dissertation chairs may be chosen from inside or outside of the School of Nursing in accordance with the following criteria:

- the chair has an earned doctorate and is tenured or tenure eligible;
- the chair is uninvolved in the student's and advisor's work;
- the chair is administratively independent from inside committee members (i.e., has minimal influence over committee members' tenure or status); and
- the chair has had prior experience serving on dissertation committees

The role of the chair is to monitor and promote fairness and rigor in the conduct of the defense. The chair's status as a nonmember of the advisor's and student's working group enables distance from previously established judgments on the candidate's work.

When the student, in consultation with their primary advisor, has a potential chair in mind and a general idea about when they would like to schedule the defense, their nomination is forwarded to the Program Director for approval. The Program Director will initiate the request to the requested /nominated chair. When the external chair is confirmed, the student and primary advisor will be notified.

Formatting Requirements

The University has specific formatting guidelines (e.g., title page, margins, pagination, order of front matter, etc.) for PhD dissertations. Those guidelines are found in the dissertation manual posted on the Graduate Education website. The SON preferred citation format is APA 7th edition, but students may use other citation formats under the guidance, and with approval, of their dissertation committees. For three-paper dissertations, students may follow the citation guidelines of the publication journals.

Scheduling the Defense

Timeline: varies (see guidelines below)

The program office works with the student to identify any potential schedule conflicts with SON meetings and/or events. The student must confirm that all committee members (including the oral defense chair) are available at the requested date/time. Once the defense date is approved by the program director, a placeholder calendar invitation is sent to the student, committee members, and defense chair.

Scheduling Guidelines by Conferral Date

1. **March, May, or October** conferral: the final defense must take place at least two weeks prior to the final submission deadline

   > Example: for May 2025 degree conferral, the final submission deadline is Wednesday, April 30, 2025. The final defense must take place no later than April 16, 2025

2. **August** conferral**:** the final defense must take place by the first week of August. See "Notes on August Conferral," below

3. **December** conferral: no defenses may be held between the end of the final examination period (varies) and December 31.

   > Example: for the Fall 2024 semester, the final examination period ends on December 18. No defenses may be held between December 19 and December 31

Notes on August Degree Conferral

Students pursuing August degree conferral are strongly encouraged to be proactive in making plans with their committees and the PhD program office. Defenses for August conferral must be carefully timed. If the final submission deadline is not met, the student must register for the fall semester and will be financially responsible for any resulting tuition/fee charges.

The PhD program office will not schedule any summer defense after the first week of August. This policy is intended to provide ample time for meeting the August submission deadline and to forestall any potential consequences of missing the deadline. Please contact the program director with any questions and/or extenuating circumstances.

Committee Review

Timeline: approximately one month prior to defense

Upon completing the writing process, the student emails a copy of the completed dissertation to all committee members, the PhD program director, and the PhD administrator. Committee members review the dissertation for content concerns, and the PhD administrator reviews the dissertation for adherence to UR formatting requirements. The PhD program director also reads the dissertation.

Per UR regulations, committee members must be given at least two weeks to review the dissertation before approving it for defense. If, upon review, any member of the committee does not support the dissertation moving forward for defense, the student must revise the dissertation as per committee recommendation. Committee members are then given an additional two weeks (at minimum) to reevaluate the dissertation.

Thesis Registration

Timeline: at least 2 weeks prior to defense

Before its final defense, the student's completed dissertation (i.e., the version deemed ready for defense by committee members) must be registered with the Office of the University Dean of Graduate Studies. The PhD administrator creates a record on the UR's PhD Completion Site. Several offices and individuals need to sign off on the registration record, including the dissertation committee, PhD program office and director, and Graduate Studies office. The registration copy must be uploaded at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled defense date. The defense cannot take place until the thesis is officially registered. Students will be notified when their thesis is officially registered.

Final Degree Requirements

Upon successful defense of the dissertation, the student receives a notice from the Graduate Studies Office outlining next steps and final degree requirements. These requirements include

1. A final, corrected (as per committee feedback) version of the dissertation uploaded to ProQuest

2. The UR research authorization form

3. The UR's PhD experience survey

4. The National Survey of Earned Doctorates

Additionally, the SON PhD office requires the following:

1. As applicable, a three-paper dissertation form

2. [optional but appreciated]: an anonymous exit survey re program-specific experiences

Links to all required submissions will be emailed to the student after the defense. All final requirements must be submitted by the deadline associated with the target conferral date.

Communications

A formal invitation is sent to all tenure-track faculty, postdocs, PhD students, and the SON communications team. Three reminders are sent: two weeks prior to defense, one week prior to defense, and a final reminder one day before defense. Upon successful defense of the dissertation, the program office sends an email notice to PhD faculty and students. Schoolwide notices of successful defenses are also included in the weekly *Dean's Desk* newsletter. Per new SON communication guidelines, students are encouraged to provide a photo and/or short blurb to accompany the newsletter post.

Checklist of Student Responsibilities and Deadlines

- o 2 – 3 months prior to target conferral date: select and confirm oral defense chair
    - o Confirm defense date with program director, all committee members, and oral defense chair

- o At least one month prior to defense: Submit completed dissertation for review
    - o Email must include all committee members, oral defense chair, PhD program director, and PhD administrator

    - o Correct any formatting errors (as identified by PhD administrator) prior to thesis registration

- o Two weeks prior to defense: thesis registration

- o Oral defense

- o By final submission deadline: revision of dissertation (as necessary and completion of final requirements

SON PhD Program
Dissertation Completion Process Worksheet

Beginning with your target graduation/conferral date, use this worksheet to determine milestones (and deadlines) within the dissertation completion process.

Target Degree Conferral (select)

        Year _____   Mar.   May   Aug.   Oct.   Dec.

Final Submission Deadline _____

    Conferral/submission calendars are available on the Graduate Education website

Defense Date _____

    March, May, or October conferral: at least two weeks prior to final submission deadline

    August conferral: no later than August 10

    December conferral: no defenses may be held between the end of the final examination period (_____) and December 31

Registration Upload Date _____

    At least two weeks prior to scheduled defense date

Completed Dissertation distributed for feedback on _____

    At least two weeks prior to registration upload date

University of Rochester
School of Nursing
PhD Qualifying Examination Scoring Guidelines

Student Name: _____
Date of Exam: _____

This rubric is used to score the written and oral portions of the PhD Qualifying Examination. Questions will vary year to year; therefore, this rubric is designed to be at a higher generalized level.

Note: Some evaluation dimensions will apply only to specific questions.

Evaluation Dimensions		Day1 Question	Day 2 Question	Day 3 Question	Comments:
Written Responses					
Applies to all 3 Questions					
Written Communication					
1. The question is answered directly, including all requested information. The writing is clear, concise, precise, and scholarly, enhancing the overall readability and impact of the paper. The paper follows a logical and coherent pattern of organization, with ideas flowing from one section to the next. Citations are included as necessary.					
Specific Area of Interest					
2. The response to the question is applied to the student's specific area of interest, indicating knowledge of the area, synthesis, appraisal of prior research, and the significance of the identified area.					

Evaluation Dimensions		Day1 Question	Day 2 Question	Day 3 Question	Comments:
Question Specific Application					
Background, rationale, and justification **Research question/ aims** 3. The introduction identifies a clear problem and provides supporting justification and rationale. The scope and significance of the problem are addressed. The research question and study aim(s) are clearly identified.					
Research Design and Methods 4. Identifies the research design. and clearly address all components (e.g., setting, participants, data collection methods, data collection procedures, data analysis plan). Procedural details are incorporated consistent with methods (Include what the plan is and how it will be done)					
Statistical Analysis 5. The analysis plan includes a clear and justified rationale for the sample size determination. All variables are operationalized, defined, and appropriately described. An appropriate analytic plan is described to answer the research aim(s), study design, and data characteristics. A discussion of the interpretation of analytic results is included.					
Epistemology, Theory, and Concepts 6. Identifies and critiques assumptions about knowing and a range of epistemological traditions. The response demonstrates conceptual and/or theoretical thinking. **Or** critically appraise theoretical frameworks of research studies, considering both the adequacy of the concept/construct formulation and the internal consistency of the specific relations between constructs.					

Evaluation Dimensions		Day1 Question	Day 2 Question	Day 3 Question	Comments:
After the Oral Session Completed					
Applies to all 3 questions					
7. Oral Communication Responds directly to questions, providing clear and thoughtful responses demonstrating an understanding of the subject matter. Demonstrates insight into the strengths and weaknesses of responses. Can clarify or expand on position if asked. Effectively defends the work when questioned.					
Applies to all 3 questions					
Summative Evaluation 8. Assess overall performance on both the written and oral responses in determining whether the student has met criteria or not, based on the examining team member's views of the student's ability to: (1) understand and interpret key concepts from core NUR course content, (2) synthesize/integrate content across all courses, (3) apply to a specific research focus (3) effectively use both written and oral forms of expression to present ideas.					

Evaluation Dimension is assessed and rated as follows:

    <u>**Strong**</u>- The response is insightful, comprehensive, and well-developed, demonstrating insight and critical thinking.

    <u>**Meets criteria**</u>- The response is accurate, complete, and logically (well-articulated) developed.

    <u>**Does not meet criteria**</u>- The response is unclear, inaccurate, incomplete, or underdeveloped.

Provide comments for student learning. If the assessment does not meet the criteria, provide specific comments on areas for growth.

    <u>**In determining an overall pass for the examination:**</u>

All three questions must be scored as met or strong. Each evaluation dimension must be evaluated as met or strong.

If the majority of evaluation dimensions are rated strong, the overall rating is strong; if the majority are rated met, the overall rating is met.

Overall Exam rating:

_____ Strong

_____ Meets criteria

_____ Does not meet criteria

Committee Team Leader: _____

Committee Members: _____

Committee Members: _____

June 25, 2025

STUDENT HANDBOOK

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER
SCHOOL OF NURSING
2025-2026

This handbook is published by the School of Nursing (SON) and is designed for use by students, staff, and faculty. The School of Nursing reserves the right to change, at any time and without notice, any of its degree requirements, policies, and requirements, and any other information contained in this handbook. Ph.D. and DNP students also receive a handbook about qualifying examinations, proposals, and dissertation preparation and registration. Programs are registered with The State Education Department, University of the State of New York, Deputy Commissioner for the Professions, Office of Professions, Albany, New York 12230 (518-474-3862) and are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), 655 K Street, NW, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20001 (P: 202-887-6791, F: 202-887-8476).

University of Rochester Mission:

We are a community in which all who work, teach, create, and provide care are welcome and respected and where all can pursue and achieve their highest objectives for themselves, their community, and the world. Steeped in Rochester's rich history of social justice and entrepreneurial spirit, we will always be an inclusive, equitable, sustainable, and responsive organization at every level.

UR Meliora Values

The University of Rochester is defined by a deep commitment to **Meliora – ever better**. Embedded in that ideal are the values we share **Equity, Leadership, Integrity, Openness, Respect, and Accountability**.
The **UR School of Nursing** is guided by this commitment and our **SON Unification Model.**