

# NURSING, PHD

**Banner Code:** PH-PHD-NURS

## Academic Advising

Website: <https://publichealth.gmu.edu/students/academic-advising>  
(<https://publichealth.gmu.edu/students/academic-advising/>)

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Nursing prepares future nurse scientists and scholars to pursue intellectual inquiry that supports health equity and contributes to the health of all populations. Graduates of the PhD program conduct independent and collaborative research, advance nursing knowledge, and provide leadership to the profession.

## Admissions & Policies

### Admissions

#### Requirements

Nursing PhD applicants must hold a master's degree in nursing. The Master's program included at least 30 credits from an institution of higher education accredited by a Mason-recognized U.S. institutional accrediting agency or international equivalent verified from official transcripts. A master's degree in a related health field will also be accepted if the applicant has a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Applicants must have a 3.00 GPA or higher on a 4.00 scale in their master's program. A valid, current nursing license in a U.S. state or territory is required; waivers for international applicants will be determined by the PhD Program Director. Applicants also must have completed a graduate-level course in statistics with a final grade of 3.00 or higher before the start of the fall semester. Applications are considered for the fall semester only. Applicants must meet the admission standards and application requirements specified in Graduate Admissions (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/>) and must apply using the online Application for Graduate Admission (<https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/>). For application deadlines and detailed application requirements, refer to the College of Public Health Admissions website (<https://publichealth.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/standards-requirements-and-deadlines/>).

### Policies

#### Time Requirements

Students must complete all requirements for the PhD in Nursing within 9 calendar years from the time of first enrollment as a doctoral student in the program. Students must advance to candidacy within 4.5 years from the start of the program. Once students advance to candidacy, they must defend their oral proposal within 2 years. PhD students are expected to progress steadily towards their degree.

#### Professional Conduct

All students in the School of Nursing are expected to adhere to the Professional Conduct Policy (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/colleges-schools/public-health/#requirementspolicytext>) of the college.

## Grading

Throughout the semester, students are assessed on how well they have met curricular outcomes. Final grades for all PhD in Nursing courses are submitted to the university as letter grades. The minimum passing grade is a B (see table).

Grade	Quality Points	Graduate Courses
A (90-100%)	4.00	Passing
B (80-89%)	3.00	Passing
C (70-79%)	2.00	Failing
F (69% or lower)	0.00	Failing

## Academic Termination

A degree-seeking student can be terminated from the PhD in Nursing program for reasons including, but not limited to, the following:

- earning unsatisfactory grades (below a 3.00) in two core courses. Any core course in which a student earns a grade below a 3.00 must be repeated and may prevent the student from progressing any further in coursework; a core course may be repeated only once. A student may not repeat more than one course. Any cognate course in which a student earns a grade below 3.00 will not be counted towards the 9 credits needed to meet the elective requirement for the PhD program.
- not passing the comprehensive exam on the second attempt.
- demonstrating a significant lack of progress.
- a finding that the student has violated the university Honor Code (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- failure to meet the time limits or to secure approval of an extension request may result in termination from the program.
- failure to enroll for two consecutive academic semesters (not including summer).

## Reduction of Credit

Students must complete all requirements for the PhD in Nursing within 9 calendar years from the time of first enrollment as a doctoral student in the program. Students must advance to candidacy within 4.5 years from the start of the program. Once students advance to candidacy, they must defend their oral proposal within 2 years. PhD students are expected to progress steadily toward their degree.

## Transfer of Credit

Students may transfer a maximum of 9 credits into the program from graduate courses taken at other institutions or taken at Mason in non-degree status, including courses offered through the college's Academic Outreach program. Transfer credit is governed by university transfer of graduate credit policy and the university requirements for doctoral degrees, which can be found in AP.6 Graduate Policies (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/>). Transfer credit must be approved by the PhD program director. Students who intend to apply to the PhD program and enroll initially through non-degree studies or the Academic Outreach program should seek course advising through the PhD program director and apply to the PhD program as soon as possible.

## Requirements

### Degree Requirements

Total credits: 78

The PhD in Nursing program comprises 78 credits, of which up to 30 credits may be reduced with approved corresponding coursework from previous graduate studies (see Reduction in Credit Policy). The resulting 48 credits include 30 credits of Core Courses, 6 elective credits, and 12 credits toward dissertation requirements.

To complete the PhD in Nursing, students must:

- Complete the program of study outlined in the PhD curriculum.
- Pass a written doctoral candidacy comprehensive examination after completing all PhD course requirements, except NURS 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal and NURS 999 Doctoral Dissertation.
- Pass the oral dissertation proposal defense and submit a dissertation proposal approved by the doctoral dissertation committee.
- Pass the final oral dissertation defense and submit a doctoral dissertation. Consistent with university graduate academic policy, final approval of the dissertation must be given by the doctoral dissertation committee, the PhD Program Director, the Director of the School of Nursing, and the Dean of the college. The dissertation is submitted in the approved format to University Libraries.
- Complete application material for graduation in accordance with prevailing Mason policies.

### Scientific Base/Research Core

Code	Title	Credits
NURS 804	Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis for Healthcare Research I	3
NURS 805	Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis for Healthcare Research II	3
NURS 814	Theory and Design in Health Science	3
NURS 860	Measurement Theories in Healthcare Research	3
NURS 920	Qualitative Research in Nursing and Health Care	3
NURS 930	Quantitative Methods in Nursing and Health Care	3
PH 810	Systematic Reviews of Health Research	3
PH 818	Advanced Ethics of Health Research	3
PH 825	Conducting and Publishing Health Research	3
GCH 700	Social and Ecological Determinants of Health	3
Total Credits		30

### Elective Courses

Students must complete a cohesive set of doctoral-level (700 or higher) elective courses selected with their academic advisor or the PhD Program Director to contribute to their program of research. A minimum of 6 credits of elective courses must be completed prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

Code	Title	Credits
Complete six credits of elective courses		6
Total Credits		6

### Dissertation

#### Advancement to Candidacy

The student must complete all coursework and pass the comprehensive examination to advance to candidacy. The Doctoral Program Director of the School of Nursing will approve the student's program of study and recommend advancement to candidacy to the director of the School of Nursing, who will render final approval for candidacy. A student who is unsuccessful in passing the comprehensive examination will be provided only one additional opportunity to sit for the examination after completing a remediation plan approved by the program director. A student who fails the comprehensive examination a second time will be terminated from the program.

#### Dissertation

The final requirement for the PhD in Nursing is the submission of an acceptable dissertation. The dissertation will be a report of an original, independent research project completed by the student and approved by the dissertation committee.

#### Dissertation Credits

During the process of writing the dissertation proposal, students must initially register for a minimum of 3 credits of NURS 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal; the student may repeat NURS 998 for variable credit until the proposal is successfully defended. The student must initially register for at least 3 credits of NURS 999 Doctoral Dissertation.

Once the student has completed the required combined minimum of 12 credits of 998 and/or 999, they must register for at least 1 credit per semester until they have successfully completed the dissertation. The University guidelines for dissertation registration (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10-6>) (998, 999) provide additional guidance.

Code	Title	Credits
At least 12 credits of		12
NURS 998	Doctoral Dissertation Proposal <sup>1</sup>	
NURS 999	Doctoral Dissertation <sup>2</sup>	
Total Credits		12

<sup>1</sup>

Students must enroll for 3 credits the first time NURS 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal is taken.

<sup>2</sup>

Students must register for at least 3 credits of NURS 999 per semester until completing a total of 12 credits for 998 and 999 combined.

#### Dissertation Committee

With the advice of the PhD Program Director and approval of the Director of the School of Nursing, the student will select a dissertation committee, composed of at least 3 members of the graduate faculty (as defined by the university), who will direct the dissertation research. The committee will be composed of a chair and at least two additional members who meet the criteria as established by university policy A.P.6.10.5

Dissertation Committee (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10-5>).

### **Dissertation Proposal**

The student, in consultation with the dissertation committee, will write an acceptable dissertation proposal approved by their dissertation committee. During the process of writing the dissertation proposal, students must initially register for a minimum of 3 credits of NURS 998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal; the student may repeat NURS 998 for variable credit until the proposal is successfully defended. Once the student has successfully defended their dissertation proposal before the dissertation committee, the student will be eligible to register for NURS 999 Doctoral Dissertation.

### **Dissertation**

The dissertation is a written report of original research in a content area of significance to the discipline of Nursing. As defined by the university, the dissertation demonstrates the candidate's mastery of the subject matter, methodologies, and conceptual foundations in their chosen field of study. The PhD in Nursing program requires that the dissertation meet the guidelines as specified by the University Library and include at least two publishable manuscripts approved by the dissertation committee. After the dissertation committee gives preliminary approval of the dissertation, the chair and PhD Program Director will schedule a final public defense of the dissertation. At the close of the public defense, the committee makes a final judgment regarding the approval of the dissertation.

The student must initially register for at least 3 credits of NURS 999 Doctoral Dissertation. Once the student has completed the required combined minimum of 12 credits of 998 and/or 999, they must register for at least 1 credit per semester until they have successfully completed the dissertation. The University guidelines for dissertation registration (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10-6>) (998, 999) provide additional guidance. Students who defend in the summer semester must be registered for at least one credit of NURS 999 Doctoral Dissertation for that summer semester.