NURSING, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.), B.S. TO PH.D. OPTION

The VCU School of Nursing Doctor of philosophy program in nursing prepares scholars to develop knowledge in the discipline of nursing to become teacher-scholars or pioneering researchers committed to the highest ideals of nursing excellence. The program examines knowledge development in nursing through an understanding of the impact of a wide range of historical influences on the discipline and through analysis of how emerging societal issues influence knowledge development. Knowledge in the humanities and social sciences and an understanding of knowledge development in other disciplines is viewed as foundational to a full understanding of knowledge development in nursing. Methodologic competency (i.e., knowledge of research designs, methodologies and tools) is also essential to a full understanding of the scope, range and path of knowledge development and the relevance to nursing practice.

The online Ph.D. program includes a combination of online courses and on-campus immersions each semester to offer students a dynamic, interactive learning experience that will prepare them to become nurse scholars and scientists. This format is designed to expand the Ph.D. program’s reach to a wider range of highly motivated, independent students who aspire to become scholars, make a significant difference in the field of nursing and study with nationally recognized nurse scientists.

During the first year of the B.S. to Ph.D. option, there are some required face-to-face courses.

Student learning outcomes
Graduates will be able to:

1. Apply, transmit and generate knowledge in the discipline of nursing
2. Construct, test and modify theories for nursing in the context of social, ethical, scientific, cultural and economic influences
3. Analyze and synthesize knowledge from related disciplines for use in nursing
4. Exhibit scientific integrity in the design and conduct of scholarly inquiry
5. Engage in interdisciplinary collaboration in knowledge development and dissemination

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (http://www.gradudent.vcu.edu) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the Graduate study section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate-students)

Degree candidacy requirements
A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must satisfy the continuing master’s or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student’s graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student’s faculty regarding the student’s academic achievements and the student’s readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the Graduate study section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate-students/degree-candidacy)

Graduation requirements
As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the Graduate study section for additional information on graduation requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate-students/graduation-requirements)

Other information
VCU School of Nursing Student Policy and Information handbooks (http://nursing.vcu.edu/about-us/resources) are located on the school’s website.

Our international and non-native English-speaking students bring different perspectives and new thinking to our nursing programs. To ensure that all incoming student are prepared for the school’s academic rigor, all international applicants and non-native English speaking applicants without a degree from a U.S. high school, college or university must provide additional information with their applications according to the English language proficiency guidelines on the program admission tab.

Visit the School of Nursing website for application instructions (http://nursing.vcu.edu/admission/application-instructions/phd).

Admission requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Semester(s) of entry</th>
<th>Deadline dates:</th>
<th>Test requirements:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Fall, odd years</td>
<td>Feb 1</td>
<td>GRE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements), applicants must present:

1. A baccalaureate degree in nursing (The degree in nursing must be from an ACEN-, CCNE- or CNEA-accredited school. Graduates of international nursing schools and applicants who have studied outside of the U.S. are required to provide a course-by-course external credential evaluation from a VCU-recognized professional evaluator. The professional evaluation may not be older than two years at the time of application. Applicants are not required to have completed a graduate degree.)

2. Graduate Record Exam score

3. Three-credit statistics course with a minimum grade of B

4. A current, unrestricted R.N. license or an authorization to practice as an R.N. in Virginia, the District of Columbia or a U.S. possession or territory (Graduates of international nursing schools who are not licensed in a state, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. possession or territory are required to obtain a VisaScreen Certificate issued by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools.)

5. If not a native speaker, provide proof of English language proficiency by submitting one of the following test scores (taken within 24 months of the time of application):
   a. TOEFL score of 100 iBT with minimum subsection scores as noted
      i. Reading – 22
      ii. Listening – 22
      iii. Speaking – 26
      iv. Writing – 24
   b. IELTS score of 7.5 overall band

Applications must complete and submit the following materials:

1. An application for graduate studies (Visit the School of Nursing website for application instructions (http://nursing.vcu.edu/admission/application-instructions/phd/),)

2. Official transcripts from all previous universities and colleges attended for all graduate and undergraduate work

3. Official GRE score report (if not waived)

4. A typed personal statement, thoughtfully and scholarly answering the following questions:
   a. What are your career goals, and how do you see this doctoral program contributing to meeting them?
   b. Within your particular area of interest, identify some problems you see as offering promise for research.
   c. What particular strengths do you believe you bring to this program that would enrich the learning environment of your peers?
   d. What do you perceive as major contemporary issues in nursing, and what are your views on at least one of them?
   e. Identify one or two potential advisers from the School of Nursing Ph.D. faculty who may be a good match for your research interests, and provide a rationale for your choice.

5. A resume that includes name and address, past educational degrees, past work experiences, professional affiliations, certifications, honors and awards, presentations, and publications

6. References from three persons who can knowledgeably comment upon applicant’s ability to succeed in an academic program (e.g., former faculty) or who can evaluate applicant’s ability to be successful in nursing research (Avoid references from ministers or others who are not familiar with professional and academic abilities; from friends, either professional or personal; or from personal health care providers.)

Note: A personal interview is required.

Guaranteed admission
School of Nursing B.S. graduates who earn University Honors through the VCU Honors College are eligible for guaranteed admission to the B.S. to Ph.D. program if their research interests align with the Ph.D. program. Requirements for GRE scores and references are waived. All other required application materials must be submitted.

Degree requirements
A minimum of 91 graduate credit hours are required for the post-B.S. to Ph.D. in Nursing program.

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/general-academic-regulations-graduate-students/graduation-requirements), a candidate for the doctoral degree in nursing must be recommended by the faculty and must:

1. Meet academic requirements of the Graduate School
2. Complete all requirements for the prescribed curriculum within eight calendar years of the first registration for work to be credited toward the degree
3. Earn a minimum grade of B or pass grade in all nursing courses
4. Earn a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all work presented for graduation
5. Conform to School of Nursing policies in respect to pass/fail grading for course work or thesis study

The degree will be granted only after all requirements have been fulfilled, all fees to the university have been paid and electronic copies of the dissertation have been submitted. Degrees are not granted in absentia unless written request is made to the dean and permission is granted.

Curriculum requirements
Master’s-level courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 503</td>
<td>Ethics, Advanced Nursing Practice and the Health Care Environment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 504</td>
<td>Advanced Nursing Practice: The Biological Basis of Health and Illness Across the Lifespan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 508</td>
<td>Policy, Processes and Systems for Advanced Nursing Practice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 512</td>
<td>Evidence-Based Advanced Nursing Practice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 592</td>
<td>Directed Study in Nursing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NURS 691  Nursing Research Practicum  3
Additional 500- and 600-level courses  12
Total Hours  30

**Ph.D.-level courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 703</td>
<td>Philosophy of Human Sciences</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 704</td>
<td>Analysis and Construction of Theory for Nursing Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Hours: 6

**Research methods and statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 700</td>
<td>Scientific Integrity: Responsible Conduct of Research</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 701</td>
<td>Statistical Methods for Nursing Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 702</td>
<td>Advanced Statistical Concepts for Nursing Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 770</td>
<td>Quantitative Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 772</td>
<td>Qualitative Research</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 773</td>
<td>Perspectives on Research Design</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Hours: 17

**Focus of inquiry**

Students are required to choose and complete focus of inquiry area.

**Focus of inquiry: Biobehavioral**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 720</td>
<td>Foundations of Biobehavioral Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 721</td>
<td>Advanced Concepts in Biobehavioral Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 725</td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Trends in Scientific Inquiry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Electives: Select six credits from courses designed to support the area of study (see below)

**Focus of inquiry: Quality and safety**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 610</td>
<td>Health Information and Data Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 638</td>
<td>Health Policy Leadership and Advocacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 725</td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Trends in Scientific Inquiry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 731</td>
<td>Foundations in Health Care Quality Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 732</td>
<td>Advanced Concepts in Health Care Quality Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Hours: 15

**Research training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 776</td>
<td>Research Program Development Seminar I</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 777</td>
<td>Research Program Development Seminar II</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 778</td>
<td>Research Program Development Seminar III</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 796</td>
<td>Directed Research Experience</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or NURS 792</td>
<td>Directed Research Inquiry</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Dissertation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 797</td>
<td>Practicum in Nursing Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Hours: 11

**Total graduate credit hours required (minimum) 91**

**Electives**

Select courses designed to support the area of study.

**NEXus cluster courses:**

- NEXS 600 - 615 (consult with adviser for appropriate courses)
- NURS 791 | Special Topics                                             | 3-6   |
- NURS 792 | Directed Research Inquiry                                   | 1-6   |
- NURS 796 | Directed Research Experience                                | 2-9   |

Other courses approved by your adviser

**Comprehensive examination requirements**

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to test synthesis of foundational knowledge in preparation for launching a program of scholarship as a beginning scientist. Three knowledge domains are critical: a) theory and philosophy, b) qualitative and c) quantitative methodological approaches. The student’s area of study is incorporated into these three domains. The comprehensive exam consists of two components, a written and an oral component, both of which must be passed. The oral exam will be conducted with the student either in person or via video conference.

**Dissertation requirements**

The student must conduct a substantial independent investigation and prepare a dissertation reporting the results of this research and analyzing its significance in relation to existing scientific knowledge. Satisfactory completion of the comprehensive examination and a satisfactory oral defense of the dissertation proposal are required prior to commencement of actual work outlined in the proposal. Once approved, the dissertation proposal is similar to a formal contract between the student and dissertation committee about the nature of the dissertation.

The dissertation committee must consist of a minimum of four members. A member of the graduate faculty of the School of Nursing who has an established program of research and prior experience on dissertation committees must chair a student’s dissertation committee. Other committee members must include one faculty member from the student’s focus area and one member from outside the School of Nursing. The dissertation committee is approved by the associate dean for academic programs in the School of Nursing. An oral defense of the dissertation is conducted by the student’s dissertation committee. The student is responsible for preparing the dissertation in accordance with the most current version of the Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Manual. (http://graduate.vcu.edu/media/graduate-school/docs/pdf/ThesisandDissertationManualUPDATED5-18-16.pdf)

**Program director**

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Program website: nursing.vcu.edu/programs/phd (http://nursing.vcu.edu/programs/phd)