NURSING, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.)

The goal of the Ph.D. program in nursing is to prepare nurse scientists who will advance health and health care through discovery and extension of knowledge in biobehavioral and health care quality research.

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.graduate.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 academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reggs)

Degree candidacy requirements

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for 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 academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reggs/grad/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 academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reggs/grad/graduation-info)

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

Degree: Fall
Semester(s) of entry: Deadline dates: Test requirements:
Ph.D. Fall Feb 1

Note: Applications may be accepted after the deadline on a space-available basis.

To be considered for admission to the School of Nursing, applicants must:

1. Meet general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements)
2. Have a baccalaureate and a master’s degree, one of which must be 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.)
3. Have a three-credit statistics course with a minimum grade of B
4. Present 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. Provide additional information with the application according to the English language proficiency guidelines in the VCU Bulletin for applicants who are international or non-native English speakers without a degree from a U.S. high school, college or university.

Applicants 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. A resume that includes name and address, past educational degrees, past work experiences, professional affiliations, certifications, honors and awards, presentations, and publications.
4. References from three persons who can knowledgeably comment upon the applicant’s ability to succeed in an academic program (e.g., former faculty) or who can evaluate the applicant’s ability to be successful in nursing research (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 will not be reviewed.)

**Note:** A personal interview is required.

**Degree requirements**

A minimum of 61 graduate credit hours are required for the Ph.D. in Nursing program.

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info), 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 course 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**

**Core courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 703</td>
<td>Philosophy of Human Sciences</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research methods and statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course 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>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 773</td>
<td>Perspectives on Research Design</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hours**

16

**Focus of inquiry**

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

**Focus of inquiry: Biobehavioral**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 720</td>
<td>Foundations of Biobehavioral Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 721</td>
<td>Advanced Concepts in Biobehavioral Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 725</td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Trends in Scientific Inquiry</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hours**

15

**Focus of inquiry: Quality and safety**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 610</td>
<td>Health Information and Emerging Health Care Technologies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 638</td>
<td>Health Policy Leadership and Advocacy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 725</td>
<td>Synthesis and Emerging Trends in Scientific Inquiry</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 731</td>
<td>Foundations in Health Care Quality Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 732</td>
<td>Advanced Concepts in Health Care Quality Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Total Hours**

15

**Research training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</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 or NURS 792</td>
<td>Directed Research Experience or Directed Research Inquiry</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURS 797</td>
<td>Practicum in Nursing Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hours**

11

**Dissertation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURS 898</td>
<td>Dissertation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hours**

13
Total graduate credit hours required (minimum) 61

Electives
Select courses designed to support the area of study.

NEXus cluster courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEXS 600 - 615</td>
<td>(consult with adviser for appropriate courses)</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 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. 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)

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