



Wilkes University

PASSAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

Ph.D. in Nursing
DISSERTATION GUIDE
2021-2022

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Overview

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Nursing Dissertation Handbook guides students in the dissertation process according to the requirements of Wilkes University and the Passan School of Nursing. The handbook is divided into three parts: the Ph.D. in Nursing program and dissertation process, guidelines for writing the dissertation proposal and dissertation, and forms. Because the information is critical and subject to change, students are responsible for adhering to all requirements and be familiar with the handbook content. Doctoral students must successfully pass the comprehensive examination in NSG 628: Ph.D. Competency before moving forward in the program and registering for NSG 629: Dissertation Seminar. Doctoral students must have completed the human subjects research training required by Wilkes University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before submitting an application.

Part I. The Ph.D. in Nursing Program and Dissertation Process

Review of General Degree Requirements

All Ph.D. students who do not pass NSG 620: Seminar I or NSG 627: Seminar II with a grade of B (83-86) or greater, regardless of student GPA, must repeat the course. All Ph.D. students are required to pass NSG 628: Ph.D. Competency (comprehensive examination) with a grade of B (83-86) or greater on all exam questions, regardless of student GPA, before proceeding to NSG 629: Dissertation Seminar. Students are provided a specific date and time period to complete the comprehensive examination during NSG 628. If a student is unsuccessful on the first attempt, they may retake the comprehensive examination one time only. If the comprehensive examination is failed a second time, students will be dismissed from the program and ineligible to return.

Students may be required to take up to six (6) credits of additional coursework in preparation for the dissertation topic chosen. This decision will be determined in consultation with their chairperson. The requirements can be met in courses such as workshops or formal credits from an academic institution. Students must complete these additional credits prior to enrollment in NSG 628: Ph.D. Competency.

Students who have not successfully completed data collection by the conclusion of NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I will be required to enroll in an additional 3-credit, 12-week extension course. More than one of these extension courses may be taken if needed to complete data collection. Students will receive an incomplete in NSG 630 until all course work is satisfied. Students who have not successfully defended their dissertations by the conclusion of NSG 631: Dissertation Implementation II will be required to enroll in an additional 3-credit, 12-week extension course. More than one of these extension courses may be taken if needed to complete the dissertation. Students will receive an incomplete in NSG 631 until all course work is satisfied. Extension courses are Pass/Fail. After the final dissertation defense, the chairperson must approve the final edited dissertation manuscript. Students must complete the program, including dissertation defense, within seven (7) years from the date of enrollment.

Leaves of Absence. Students who are unable to continue graduate degree studies, due to medical or personal reasons, are eligible for a graduate nursing program-approved leave of absence. Student advisors should be notified by students when requesting a leave of absence. Students will be directed to complete a *Leave of Absence* form and return it to their advisor. The expectation is that a student will notify their advisor prior to the anticipated leave. Students in 8 week courses may request up to a maximum of 8 LOA periods during the course of their program of study. Students in 12 week courses may request up to a maximum of 4 LOA semesters during their program of study.

If a student is in dissertation courses such as NSG 629, 630 or 631, the *Leave of Absence* form is completed by the student and submitted to the Ph.D. program coordinator and also to the

dissertation chairperson. The Ph.D. program coordinator and dissertation chairperson review the request. The Ph.D. coordinator makes the final determination. Approval is only given for one semester at a time. Failure to file a form or repeated requests can result in dismissal from the program.

Extension of Time to Complete the Degree. Appeals for extension to complete the program beyond the seven-year limit are reviewed by the faculty and approved or declined by the Ph.D. program coordinator based on faculty recommendations and the evidence submitted by the student on a case-by-case basis and only in special circumstances. The process to appeal for an extension is available from the school office.

Research Topic

Doctoral students formulate their research topic at the beginning of course work based upon pertinent literature and experiential context. Students complete a *Contract for Research Commitment* in NSG 615: Introductory Seminar, the first course in the program. Prospective dissertation chairs are chosen based upon like-minded interests with the students and the dissertation committee is comprised of members providing subject matter, statistical, and/or methodological expertise.

When selecting the research topic and developing a work timeline, students should keep several key points in mind:

- set measurable short and long term goals toward completion of the dissertation
- acquire a command of both the topic area and the methodology while developing a proposal of the research study
- design a research study that is manageable in scope, including access to the population under study, and be able to be completed with available resources within the time frame of the program. This includes time for review and revision at all levels of the proposal and the dissertation through the final defense
- produce original research that reflects the highest standards of academic integrity and scholarly writing

NSG 628: Ph.D. Competency (Course prerequisites: NSG 627 and authorization from the PhD Program Coordinator to register for comprehensive examination)

Course content and sequencing is designed to prepare students to determine their research topic and begin development of the first three chapters of the dissertation proposal. After successful completion of NSG 627: Seminar II and authorization from the PhD Program Coordinator, students will be registered for NSG 628: Ph.D. Competency. Students who are required to take an additional three (3) to six (6) credits to support their dissertation topic must complete these credits prior to enrollment in NSG 628. This one (1) credit 2-week course includes a comprehensive written examination consisting of a series of questions that focus on the synthesis

and integration of knowledge learned during doctoral coursework. The examination allows students to demonstrate their ability and preparedness to move forward in the Ph.D. in Nursing program. The comprehensive examination is scheduled and conducted during a specific date and time. No other courses are taken in conjunction with NSG 628.

Two PhD faculty are assigned to grade each student's exam independently using a double-blinded process, then arrive at an average grade using a designated scoring sheet. In the event a large discrepancy exists between the scores, the PhD Program Coordinator will be the third reviewer. All Ph.D. students are required to pass NSG 628: Ph.D. Competency (comprehensive examination) with a grade of B (83-86) or greater on all questions, regardless of student GPA, before proceeding to NSG 629: Dissertation Seminar. Students who are unsuccessful on the first attempt may retake the examination one time only. If the comprehensive examination is failed a second time, students will be dismissed from the program and ineligible to return. Students wanting to appeal dismissal from the program must follow the Appeal of Grade Policy in the Graduate Student Handbook.

Dissertation Courses

1. NSG 629: Dissertation Seminar (Course prerequisites: NSG 628)

After students pass NSG 628: Ph.D. Competency, they will be registered for NSG 629: Dissertation Seminar, a three (3) credit course focused on completion of the first three chapters of the dissertation in preparation for proposal defense and IRB submission. No other courses are taken in conjunction with NSG 629. After successful completion of the dissertation proposal defense, the student submits an application for Wilkes University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and registers for NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I. If amendments to the proposal are required by the IRB, the student will revise the proposal, in consultation with the chairperson and committee members. Students who are required to submit an external IRB application are not required to submit an application to the Wilkes University IRB but are required to upload a copy of the approval letter and approved application or protocol into the IRB Mentor system. Upon receipt of IRB approval, the student can then, and only then, begin to collect data. Students are not permitted to engage in any dissertation activity/implementation until the start of NSG 630. A student may receive an incomplete for the course if there is a delay in IRB approval or an unsuccessful proposal defense. See NSG 629 syllabus for additional information.

2. NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I (Course prerequisites: NSG 629)

Students must have successfully defended their dissertation proposal in NSG 629 to register for NSG 630. NSG 630 is a three (3) credit course focused on data collection and implementation of the dissertation research study. After completion of the first three chapters, successful proposal defense, and IRB approval, the student, under guidance from their chairperson, begins the data collection process. See NSG 630 syllabus for additional information.

3. NSG 631: Dissertation Implementation II (Course prerequisites: NSG 630)

NSG 631 is a three (3) credit course designed to continue the implementation of the dissertation research study. Students complete data collection and analysis, and finalize chapters 4 and 5. The final dissertation defense is scheduled upon the approval of the student's dissertation chairperson and committee. See NSG 631 syllabus for additional information.

Student Responsibilities

Students must adhere to and are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity and scholarly writing in the proposal and dissertation as prescribed by the Passan School of Nursing, Wilkes University, and as described in the most current Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). Completion of the dissertation is partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion of the Ph.D. degree. It is a rigorous research study designed and implemented by the doctoral student with the assistance of the dissertation chairperson and committee members.

Students are responsible to submit drafts to the dissertation chair and committee members according to the course schedule and to maintain an agreed upon schedule for communication. If students are unable to maintain the schedule, they must contact the dissertation chairperson as soon as possible for re-negotiation purposes. Drafts of proposals and dissertations submitted are held to the same standards of academic integrity as the final proposal and final dissertation. Students provide committee members and other reviewers with drafts in an electronic format based on the preference of those individuals. Documents should be saved in Microsoft Word format and labeled in the following manner-*Student Name Proposal Chapter 1*.

Revisions to the drafts are based upon the recommendations of those reviewing the proposal and dissertation. Revised submissions demonstrate substantive changes reflective of the student's efforts to produce a high quality document that adheres to the standards as described previously.

Students are responsible for final editing and formatting of the defensible proposal and the defensible dissertation under the guidance and advisement of the dissertation chairperson and the committee members. At the time of each defense, the student submits a final, edited, defensible proposal and dissertation, not drafts. The student will also submit a power point presentation of the proposal and dissertation to the dissertation chairperson, committee members, and PhD Program Coordinator two weeks prior to each scheduled defense. Students must follow the procedures outlined in this guide for defense of the proposal and dissertation.

After successful final dissertation defense, students must submit their final dissertation manuscript to a professional editor and are responsible for all editing costs. A list of professional editors can be found on the E.S. Farley library Graduate Nursing Academic Resource Center website under Editor/Writing Support. Students must also submit their final, professionally

edited dissertation manuscript to ProQuest ETD Administrator for publishing. Directions for submitting to ProQuest ETD are provided to students by the PhD Program Coordinator.

Selecting a Dissertation Chairperson and Committee Members

Students select a chairperson who has expertise in the area of research or scholarship they intend to pursue. Committee members are chosen in consultation with the chairperson, and complement the composition of the committee by providing subject matter, statistical, and/or methodological expertise. A list of qualified faculty to serve as chairpersons are available to the student early in the program. Students should be prepared to have a list of questions to ask potential chairpersons related to their orientation to the research topic.

Composition of the Dissertation Committee and Responsibilities

The committee consists of at least three members, including the chairperson. The dissertation chairperson must hold a terminal degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Nursing or Doctor of Nursing Science (DNS, DSN, DNSc, or DScN.). The chairperson must be a full-time, part-time, or adjunct faculty member in the Passan School of Nursing. Students have access to chairperson videos in NSG: 615 Introductory Seminar.

A second committee member must be a full-time, part-time, or adjunct faculty member of Wilkes University and hold a terminal degree. Students may select a third committee member either internal or external to Wilkes University. If an external member is selected, a copy of the external member's Curriculum Vitae (CV) and a synopsis of the member's expertise related to why the student chose this member is submitted to the chairperson and Ph.D. Program Coordinator for consideration. The chairperson must be selected and approved prior to the student registering for NSG 620: Seminar I. All committee members must be selected and approved prior to the student registering for NSG 627: Seminar II.

For international students, the third committee member must be selected from the country in which the dissertation will be conducted. The member must be a full time faculty member in a school or college of nursing. A copy of the external member's Curriculum Vitae (CV) and a synopsis of the member's expertise related to why the students chose this member is submitted to the chairperson and Ph.D. program coordinator for consideration. The international committee member must agree to oversee the data collection process and monitor human subjects' protections. The international member also must agree to actively participate in the dissertation committee by phone, email, or webinar as directed by dissertation chairperson.

Students are responsible for completing the *Approval for Appointment of Dissertation Committee Chairperson & Members*, obtaining the appropriate signatures, and submitting the form to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator for approval. Electronic signatures are accepted. The form must be completed prior to the student registering for NSG 627: Seminar II.

Chairperson Responsibilities

The dissertation chairperson assumes the following responsibilities:

- be familiar with all Passan School of Nursing and Wilkes University policies, procedures, and guidelines related to academic integrity, the development of the proposal and the dissertation, and the defense process.
- advise the student to determine if an additional three (3) to six (6) elective credits to support their dissertation topic must be completed
- act as the student's primary advisor through all phases of the dissertation process, beginning in NSG 620: Seminar I and continuing through to the final dissertation defense
- work in collaboration with the course professor in NSG 620: Seminar I and NSG 627: Seminar II
- assist the student with selection of dissertation committee members
- recommend a change in the membership of the committee, if needed
- guide the student in establishing realistic timelines for completion of the dissertation
- assign student grades in dissertation courses
- assist the student in the dissertation proposal process
- determine when a document is ready for electronic review by the committee and initiate contact among the committee members
- ensure that the proposal and dissertation have addressed the requirements for the protection of human subjects in research prior to applying to the Wilkes University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval or other IRB as required
- maintain human subjects research training certificate
- communicate the date of the dissertation defense to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled date
- prepare the student for the final defense process
- convene committee meetings, the proposal defense, and the dissertation defense
- approve the final edited dissertation manuscript
- coordinate meetings with other committee members as needed
- ensure the completion of all dissertation forms

Committee Members Responsibilities

- advise the student, in conjunction with the chairperson, in the development of the proposal and final dissertation
- provide meaningful feedback to the student in areas appropriate to each members' expertise as directed by the dissertation chairperson
- attend the proposal and final dissertation defense
- be available to consult with the student, chairperson, and other committee members as needed

In rare circumstances, a change in the committee composition may occur. If a change of chairperson or committee member is needed, the Ph.D. Program Coordinator must be notified

and the Ph.D. Program Coordinator will make the final decision to allow or disallow a change. Agreement from an individual qualified and willing to replace the existing dissertation chairperson or committee member must be tentatively secured before such a request is made. If the chairperson or a committee member is unable to serve, the Ph.D. Program Coordinator will advise the student in selecting another member.

If during the dissertation phase, a student perceives a committee member to be hindering the progress of the study, the student must communicate the concerns directly to the chairperson in a timely manner and work together to resolve the issue. If during the dissertation phase, the student perceives the chairperson to be hindering the progress of the study, the student must communicate the concerns directly to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator. It is the responsibility of the Ph.D. Program Coordinator to communicate with all parties involved to remediate the situation. In circumstances where remediation is not possible, the Ph.D. Program Coordinator will advise the student regarding alternatives.

If significant conflict exists between the student and chairperson, the chairperson may resign from the committee. Reasons for conflict include the student's lack of progress because of noncompliance issues such as not following the chairperson's guidance and direction, submission of substandard work on a continual basis after receiving feedback, repeated failure to communicate or meet with the chair when scheduled, or other reasons within the student's control. The Ph.D. Program Coordinator must approve the chairperson's resignation from the committee. If the student secures a new chairperson and is then dropped by the new chairperson due to continued issues stemming from the student's performance, the student will not be permitted to secure yet another chairperson and will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

In any instance of a change in the composition of the committee, the student is responsible for securing a signed, updated *Approval for Appointment of Dissertation Committee: Chair and Members* form. All appropriate personnel will be notified of the change.

Committee Governance

The dissertation committee operates under the direction and leadership of the chairperson and the chairperson is the student's primary advisor during the dissertation process. The chairperson keeps the committee informed on the student's progress and acts as a liaison between the student and the Ph.D. Program Coordinator. The dissertation chairperson convenes committee meetings, the proposal defense, and the dissertation defense. The chairperson has the overarching responsibility to ensure that the dissertation study addresses the requirements for the protection of human subjects in research.

Proposal Defense

After the dissertation committee determines the student is eligible to defend the proposal, the student and chairperson complete the *Proposal Defense Request* form and submits it to the Ph.D.

Program Coordinator of the Passan School of Nursing no less than two weeks prior to the proposed defense date. The Ph.D. Program Coordinator will schedule the proposal defense in the within the NSG 629 course.

The proposal defense scheduled during NSG 629: Dissertation Seminar is an oral presentation of the first three (3) chapters of the dissertation and is done via video conferencing. A clean copy of the written proposal and a power point presentation of the proposal will be distributed to the committee and Ph.D. Program Coordinator by the student two weeks prior to the defense date. Students will have approximately thirty (30) minutes to present, followed by a question and answer period. Only the committee members and Ph.D. Program Coordinator may attend the proposal defense. The committee is responsible for reviewing the following documents prior to the proposal defense:

1. NSG 629 Dissertation Seminar Proposal Defense Checklist
2. NSG 629 Dissertation Seminar Proposal Defense Procedure
3. NSG 629 Dissertation Seminar Outcome of the Proposal Defense and Elevation to Doctoral Candidacy

Students should structure the proposal defense power point presentation around the following information.

- Title of the study
- List of committee members
- Background of the problem (why is the topic worthy of study?)
- Purpose of the study
- Research questions/hypotheses (connect the appropriateness of the research questions/hypothesis to the study)
- Philosophical background (connect the student's philosophical background to the research design)
- Theoretical framework
- Significance of the study to nursing science
- Brief background on existent literature and gaps in the literature
- Methodology and design, including general statistical strategy if applicable
- Ethical Considerations
- Select references
- Questions and answers

The proposal defense is conducted in a supportive environment with an intent to strengthen the study by offering recommendations by the committee. At the end of the presentation, the student leaves the video conference session so the committee members can discuss recommendations and determine the status of the proposal. Any revisions to the proposal must be submitted to the

dissertation chairperson and committee members before the student proceeds with the IRB application. See the Proposal Defense Procedures document for more information.

Proposal Defense (NSG 629) Evaluative Criteria

1. Pass: The student proceeds to NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I with no revisions.
2. Pass with Revisions: The student will have minor revisions to be submitted to the chairperson within two weeks to receive approval to register for NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I. After confirmation from the chairperson, the student may immediately submit the IRB application.
3. Conditional Pass: The student will have revisions to be submitted to the chairperson and committee members and cannot register for NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I until the revised proposal is accepted by the full committee. The student may not submit the IRB application until the revised proposal is accepted.
4. Revise and Redefend: The student will receive an incomplete for the course, be required to complete major revisions to the proposal and be required to redefend. The student may not proceed to NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I and IRB unless a successful re-defense occurs.
5. Fail: The student will have no opportunity to revise the proposal and will not be permitted to continue in the program.

The chairperson and committee members will inform the student of the outcome of the defense. The Ph.D. Program Coordinator will complete the Outcome of the Dissertation Proposal and Elevation to Doctoral Candidacy and submit this to the Dean of the Passan School of Nursing for signature. A copy will be sent to the student and dissertation chairperson.

Wilkes Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The purpose of the IRB is to protect human subjects involved in research. This research is required to be reviewed and approved by the IRB of Wilkes University before data collection can begin. Students must follow University procedures to apply and obtain written approval from the IRB. All applications are submitted through the IRB Mentor system. Applications will no longer be submitted by email. The dissertation chairperson serves as the faculty sponsor and reviews the application. Students who are required to submit an external IRB application are not required to submit an application to the Wilkes University IRB but are required to upload a copy of the approval letter and approved application or protocol into the IRB Mentor system. The deadline for receipt of IRB applications is two weeks prior to the meeting. Information on the Wilkes University IRB application, committee meeting dates, and instructions is found on IRB Mentor. The IRB Mentor software system can be accessed through the Wilkes Portal (portal.wilkes.edu).

The IRB approval is to be referred to in the proposal and the approval document from the IRB should appear as an appendix in the dissertation, in addition to letters of informed consent, interview protocols, questionnaires, observation forms, surveys, and other data collection instruments related to the research study. Wilkes University's IRB requires that principal investigators have current training in the protection of human subjects in research.

Under no circumstances should data collection be initiated without review and approval from the IRB, and the student must be enrolled in NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I. Any student who violates this policy may be dismissed from the program. The student should consult with the dissertation chairperson accordingly.

Dissertation Clearance Process

Students conducting research in a clinical setting are required to secure clinical clearances prior to registering for NSG 629: Dissertation Seminar. Students will be notified by the Graduate Clinical Coordinator for the Wilkes University Passan School of Nursing to initiate and complete the clinical clearance process. Students conducting research in a non-clinical setting are not required to secure clinical clearances but may be required to have a Wilkes University Non-Clinical Research Agreement in place with the research site.

Dissertation Defense (NSG 631)

Students must successfully defend the dissertation in order to complete degree requirements. The student is responsible for submitting copies of the dissertation in its final, defensible edited format. When the committee determines that the dissertation is ready for defense, the dissertation chairperson will submit the Notification of Intent: Defense of the Dissertation by the deadlines indicated in the NSG 631 course calendar. . Students who have not successfully defended their dissertations by the conclusion of NSG 631: Dissertation Implementation II will be required to enroll in an additional 3-credit, 12-week extension course. More than one of these extension courses may be taken if needed to complete the dissertation. Students will receive an incomplete in NSG 631 until all course work is satisfied.

The dissertation defense is an oral, final presentation to the committee and invited guests and may be done via video conferencing. It must be scheduled at a time that all Dissertation Committee members are available. The presentation is open to faculty from the Passan School of Nursing, Wilkes University faculty at large, other students in the Ph.D. in Nursing Program, and those whom the student wishes to invite. The Dissertation Chairperson is responsible for communicating the date to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to the defense date. The defense is announced within the Passan School of Nursing and via the daily Wilkes University email (today@wilkes.edu). The Passan School of Nursing requires all dissertation defenses to be publicized in advance and to be open to all faculty and students.

A clean copy of the written dissertation and a power point presentation of the defense will be distributed to the committee by the student two weeks prior to the defense date. Students will have approximately forty-five (45) minutes to present, followed by a question and answer period. At the conclusion of the presentation portion of the defense, audience members may remain for the question and answer session but only the dissertation chairperson and committee members ask questions of the student. After the question and answer session, the student and audience members leave the room or video conference for the deliberation period. After deliberations conclude, the chairperson shares the outcome with the student.

Students should structure the dissertation defense power point presentation around the following information.

- Title of the study
- List of committee members
- Background of the problem
- Purpose of the study
- Research questions/hypotheses
- Philosophical background
- Theoretical framework
- Significance of the study
- Brief background on existent literature and gaps in the literature
- Methodology and design, including general statistical strategy if applicable
- Ethical Considerations
- Findings
- Integration of the findings with the literature
- Limitations
- Implications for the discipline of nursing
- Recommendations for future research
- Select References

Dissertation Defense Outcomes

1. Pass. The student will be recommended for the degree without further revision or examination.
2. Pass with Revisions. The student will be recommended for the degree subject to amendments or further revisions to the text, but without further examination.
3. Conditional Pass. The student will be recommended for the degree subject to further revision to the text and may be called to defend revisions to satisfy the committee members' questions.

4. **Revise and Redefend.** The student will not yet be recommended for the degree and will receive an incomplete for the course. The student will be permitted to resubmit the dissertation in a revised form and called to defend the dissertation again.

5. **Fail.** The student will not be recommended for the degree and a new dissertation cycle will be suggested or no opportunity for future submission or defense will be granted.

If no revisions or only minor revisions are needed (Outcomes 1 and 2), the signatures of the committee members should be obtained at the close of the dissertation defense period on the Signature Page of the dissertation. Electronic signatures are permitted through DocuSign®. If revisions are required (Outcome 2), the dissertation chairperson can notify the committee members that the revisions to the dissertation have been satisfactorily made upon receipt of the final draft of the dissertation from the student.

If revisions are needed following the dissertation defense, committee members may withhold signatures until revisions have been made and questions have been satisfactorily addressed (Outcome 3).

Should the committee members determine that the dissertation and defense are not satisfactory while in deliberations, the student may be permitted to resubmit the dissertation in a revised form and defend the revised dissertation (Outcome 4).

The committee members may also determine that a student should not be awarded the degree and choose to either suggest a new dissertation cycle or determine that no opportunity for future submission or defense be granted (Outcome 5).

Oral notice on the outcome of the defense will be given to the student by the dissertation chairperson at the close of the dissertation defense period. A detailed summation of the revisions based on the committee members' reviews should be provided to the student by the dissertation chairperson.

Completion of the Dissertation Process

The student is responsible for completing all revisions to the dissertation prior to graduation and for ensuring that the dissertation adheres to the most recent APA and school guidelines. The dissertation chairperson must approve the dissertation's final form before it is submitted to the designated provider for publication. The student should contact the Ph.D. Program Coordinator for specific information on final dissertation processing.

Part II. Guidelines for Writing the Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation

The requirements detailed in the most current edition of this guide is the prescribed style for a dissertation from the Passan School of Nursing and Wilkes University. Dissertations must comply with the current guidelines and standards of the most current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)* and this guide. Any deviations from APA are noted in this section and are intended for the dissertation proposal and final dissertation only.

Organization of the Written Dissertation

The outline below, lists the elements to be included in the dissertation and highlights those that should also appear in the proposal. Detailed information about the structure of the proposal and dissertation appears in the “Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation Guidelines” in this section.

Dissertation Organization Outline

Items marked with an asterisk (*) are included in the proposal, as well as in the final dissertation.

- * Title page

- Signature page

- Copyright page

- Dedication

- Acknowledgment

- Abstract

- * Table of Contents

- * List of Tables (if any)

- * List of Figures (if any)

- * Chapter I. Statement of the Problem

- * Chapter II. Review of the Literature

- * Chapter III. Methodology

- Chapter IV. Findings

Chapter V. Conclusions

- * References
- * Appendices

Table of Contents

The table of contents for the proposal and dissertation lists all of the elements with accompanying page numbers. The table of contents should be double-spaced between entries with entries longer than one line single-spaced. (Refer to the sample table of contents page.)

Dedication and Acknowledgments

A student may want to dedicate the dissertation to a person or persons who have made a personal and/or professional impact on the author. The dedication should be brief and placed before the acknowledgments on a separate page. Acknowledgments give credit for external support received throughout the dissertation process and generally recognize the contributions of committee members and others who made important contributions. If the research has been funded by a grant, the student should check with the funding agency regarding proper acknowledgment. Most outside funding sources require some statement of acknowledgment of support; some may also require a disclaimer from responsibility for the results.

Style and Formatting

Students must refer to the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)* for specific writing and style guidelines. A research proposal generally describes a study that the student will complete; a dissertation describes the completed study, therefore the writing in the final document should reflect this shift from future tense to present or past, as dictated by the research. In the literature review, for example, discussions of reported research activities are generally described in the past tense. Methods from the proposal that were described in the future tense will need to be changed in the dissertation to past tense when describing work that has been completed.

Margins and Spacing

Each page of the dissertation document must be double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. This applies to all pages of the document, including the abstract, title, illustrations, tables, appendices, and block quotations of 40 words or more. Some exceptions include quotations as paragraphs, captions, lists, graphs, charts, footnotes/endnotes, bibliographic entries, items within tables, and lists in appendices. Irregular spacing may be used to accommodate poetry or other creative writing. The dissertation document is left justified. Paragraphs are indented using the tab key set at one-half inch. Italics should be used only as indicated by APA style standards. No extra spacing appears before or after headings or between paragraphs. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that these standards are met in the original print and electronic documents and all photocopies.

Font

The document should be typed in 12-pt. Times New Roman. The same font should be used throughout the manuscript; however, the use of another font in figures or tables is acceptable. If an alternative font is used in figures, it is important that usage remain consistent throughout the figures of the document. Photocopied materials in the appendices, such as informed consent forms or questionnaires, should maintain the original typeface.

Hyperlinks

Refer to the most recent version of the APA manual for formatting hyperlinks such as DOIs and URLs.

Section Levels and Headings

The appropriate use of headings is important for organizing the information presented in a dissertation. The *Publication Manual of the APA* contains a style guide for five levels of headings. The title of the dissertation should not appear as a heading on Chapter I, rather the chapter title is the level 1 heading. (Note: This deviates from the APA standard.)

Running Heads and Page Numbering

The title page should have the running head (a maximum of 50 characters, counting letters, punctuation, and spaces between words as characters) identified and the running head should appear throughout the document, as appearing below and on the sample title page.

On the title page—Running head: TITLE 50 CHARACTERS CAPITALIZED

Subsequent pages—TITLE 50 CHARACTERS CAPITALIZED

For all pages with Arabic page numbering, the page number should be in the upper right-hand corner of the page with a one-inch margin above and a one-inch margin to the right of the page number. In all cases, there should be a double space between the page number and the text of the page. The running head will be aligned with the left margin to the left of the page number.

For all pages with lowercase Roman numeral page numbering—the abstract, dedication, acknowledgment, table of contents, list of tables, and list of figures—the page number should be centered at the bottom of the page with a one-inch margin under the page number. Numerals on pages in the body of the work should be Arabic and should appear within the corner defined by the upper and right margins of each page. References and appendices are numbered as continuations of the text Arabic numerals.

Because the dissertation is a published document, the title page, signature page, and copyright page should not be numbered. This applies to both the proposal (title page) and the dissertation. (Note: This deviates from the APA standard.)

Graphics

Graphics appropriate for use in dissertations include illustrations, maps, diagrams, and photographs and are labeled and listed as figures. Graphics should be of comparable print quality to the manuscript, be titled in the same font size and style as the manuscript, and numbered in Arabic numerals. Graphics must not exceed the margin requirements outlined in this guide for text pages. Figures and tables included within the text, not as appendices, should be integrated into the text of the document and not at the end of the text.

Writing Style

Proper grammar and usage are required in writing the dissertation and should be written in a formal and direct style that clearly and succinctly delineates each stage of the study. Students should use the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the APA* and *A Writer's Reference* for guidance. Language that may suggest bias on the basis of gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or disability should be avoided. Differences should only be mentioned when relevant. To acknowledge participation in the study, the term *participants* or *respondents* should be used in place of the impersonal, *subjects*. Word choice should reflect the terminology currently used in the field of study related to sexual orientation, racial and ethnic identity, disability and age.

Defensible Proposal and Dissertation

The dissertation chairperson and any committee member have the right and responsibility to delay a defense if the standards for research, APA writing style and format, or school guidelines have not been met in the document submitted by the student for defense. The proposal or final defense will be re-scheduled if a committee member is unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances. The Ph.D. Program Coordinator may also delay the defense if school guidelines are not met in the final document submitted with the intention to defend. These guidelines appear in this section of the Ph.D. Dissertation Guide. In such instances, the student and chairperson will be contacted and the deficiencies will be identified so that they can be addressed and the defense can be scheduled for a future date.

Sample Title Page

[Text on the title page should be centered, taking into consideration the margin specifications.]

Running head: TITLE 50 CHARACTERS CAPITALIZED
(INCLUDES LETTERS, PUNCTUATION, AND SPACES)

Dissertation Title

[Note: The title should be a succinct summary of the topic and include key terms that identify the scope and nature of the study. The title should generally should not exceed 10-12 words and avoid the use of unnecessary words.]

Candidate's Full Name
Institution

A dissertation submitted to the
Passan School of Nursing
at
Wilkes University
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Month day, year

Sample Signature Page

(Note: This is prepared by the department and only a placeholder page needs to be included by the student.)

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

Dissertation Title

prepared by

Candidate's Full Name

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing at Wilkes University.

Approved by:

<Typed name and credentials – e.g., Deborah Zbegner, PhD, CRNP, WHNP-C> Dean, Passan School of Nursing	Date

<Typed name and credentials – e.g., Robin Chard, PhD, RN, CNOR> PhD Program Coordinator	Date

<Typed name and credentials> Chairperson of Dissertation Committee	Date

<Typed name and credentials> Dissertation Committee Member	Date

<Typed name and credentials> Dissertation Committee Member	Date

<Typed name and credentials> Dissertation Committee Member	Date

Passan School of Nursing
Wilkes University
Month day, year

Sample Copyright Page

Copyright © year Candidate's first and last name

All rights reserved

(Candidates can apply for a copyright for their work upon its publication through ProQuest.)

Sample Abstract Page

An abstract is between 150-250 words. It is double-spaced with no indent on the first line. It describes the overall background of the research problem in the first sentences and indicates why it is important. It identifies the purpose and theoretical foundations, if appropriate, summarizes the key research question(s), briefly describes the overall research design, methods and data analysis procedures. It identifies the key results, one or two conclusions, and recommendations that capture the heart of the research. It concludes with a statement on the implications for the discipline of nursing.

Leave one line of space after the abstract and begin the next line indented one-half inch with the word *Keywords*: List key words.

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page numbers are arbitrary and meant as a guide only

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Examples of Chapter Content

Chapter I. Statement of the Problem

Note: These sections can be reordered with the exception of the introduction and Definition of Terms, based on the study, but these headings and content need to appear in Chapter I.

1. Introduction

The introduction is **untitled** and has a clear statement demonstrating that the focus of the research is on a significant problem that is worthy of study. There is a brief, well-articulated summary of the problem and mention of the methodology that will be used to study the problem. The need for the study is summarized with citations leading to more detailed discussion in Chapter II. It is a natural bridge to the problem statement.

2. Problem Statement

In **quantitative** studies, the problem statement concisely states what will be studied by describing at least two variables and a conjectured relationship between them.

In **qualitative** studies, the problem statement describes the need for an increased study of and understanding about the issue to be studied. Both statements are a natural bridge to the purpose of the study.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is described in a logical, explicit manner without opinion, advocacy, or bias as related to the problem and the existing research (to be detailed in Chapter II). It should answer the questions: what is being studied, who is being studied, and why it is being studied.

4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions (and sub-questions) and hypotheses (**in quantitative studies only**) are briefly and clearly described. These appear again in Chapters III and V. Research questions and hypotheses emerge as a result of a thorough review of the literature.

5. Philosophical Background

The philosophical worldview proposed in the study is presented along with a definition of the basic ideas of the worldview and how the worldview influenced the student's approach to the research study.

6. Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The theoretical or conceptual framework is presented as an overview in Chapter I and is discussed in greater depth in Chapter II. The theoretical or conceptual framework consists of the ideas from existing theory and concepts from the literature that support, justify, and guide the research being conducted.

7. Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions provide descriptions of facts assumed to be true but not actually verified (e.g., participants are truthful in their responses, a sample is representative of the population). Assumptions are justified through steps taken by the researcher in the design of the study. Paradigmatic assumptions, particular to choice of methodological inquiry, are also addressed by the researcher. Limitations are potential weaknesses (i.e., inability to generalize the results) and outside of the control of the researcher. Limitations fall under two main categories—methodology and researcher. Examples include sampling method, time constraints, instrumentation, study rigor, and researcher bias and/or experience. Delimitations, within the control of the researcher, are limitations put in place to limit the scope of the study and control for factors that may affect the results. Examples include geographic location and exclusion criteria of participants.

8. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is described in terms of its possible application to the problem from which the research emanates, its relevance to the nursing discipline, and its contribution to existing literature and general nursing knowledge. Dependent on the research topic, significance specific to nursing education, practice, research, and public policy may be included.

9. Definitions of Terms

The definition of terms is provided related to the study. Theoretical definitions are those defined within the theoretical or conceptual framework used in the study and operational definitions measure the study variables. Each *term* is introduced in italics with parallel wording and construction throughout the list of terms and definitions (i.e., complete sentences or phrases with an em dash [*term*—definition]). The terms appear in alphabetical order. Citations are included as needed.

10. Chapter Summary

Summarize the main points of discussion and provide a preview of content in chapter II.

Chapter II. Review of the Literature

Note: These are guidelines for the function and purpose of the literature review. The organization of the literature review and the topics discussed will be dependent on the study.

1. There is an untitled **introduction** that describes the content and organization of the literature review, followed by the level 2 heading-**Search Strategy**. Organize this section according to the following:
 - a. list of topics searched
 - b. list of databases utilized in the search
 - c. list of other sources, including grey literature
 - d. key words
 - e. exclusion criteria
 - f. number of studies found
 - g. inclusion criteria applied and why
 - h. number of studies remaining after inclusion criteria applied

2. The literature review is an integrated, critical chapter on the most relevant, reliable, and published knowledge on the topic. It is an exhaustive review of the literature that synthesizes the existing research related to the problem and builds a case from credible evidence. It provides context and background about the current state of the science on the topic. It is not sectioned into separate disjointed thoughts or studies. The review is organized around major ideas or themes and headings and subheadings are used to clearly identify its structure.
3. The review of related research and literature is clearly linked to the problem as expressed in topic headings and subheadings that are related to the research problem, participants or site, research questions and hypotheses, and the study's purpose.
4. A review of the literature is required for any theoretical or conceptual framework, including a visual depiction of how the selected theory or conceptual framework guides the study.
5. A review of the literature is required for any instrument used in the study including a report on its reliability and validity.
6. After a thorough review of the literature, Chapter I should be revisited and refined to ensure the purpose of the study, its research questions, theoretical framework, and significance are connected to the literature review and emerged as a result of that review. During the dissertation research process, updates to the literature review can be made to reflect the findings of the study.
7. The review of related research and literature includes comparisons and contrasts of different points of view or different research outcomes and the relationship of the dissertation research study to previous research.
8. The review contains concise summaries that define the most important aspects of the theory that will be examined or tested and the research variables (for quantitative studies) or substantiate the rationale or conceptual framework for the study and the potential themes and perceptions to be explored (for qualitative studies).
9. The content of the review is primarily drawn from:
 - a. acceptable peer-reviewed journals or papers, research-based scholarly journals, research reports, dissertations and theses, professional books (other sources must be justified as to its inclusion in the review);
 - b. recent literature and research (within 5 to 10 years of the date of the study); and
 - c. classic literature or seminal research over 10 years old, if related to the theoretical or conceptual frameworks or the history and background of the problem.

Chapter III. Methodology

For Qualitative Studies:

1. The **introduction** is untitled and describes how the research design derives logically from the purpose of the study and the research questions.
2. **Rationale for Research Approach**
The choice of the general research approach is justified with reasons given as to why the chosen design is the most appropriate one for the study. The research questions and sub-questions appear in this section and are clearly connected to the rationale.
3. **Research Design**
The **specific** qualitative research design that will be used is explained in detail, to the extent that the study can be replicated by another researcher. The rationale as to why the design was selected is explained.
4. **Site and Sample Selection**
The context for the study is described and justified, as needed. The site and sample are described, and there is a justification for the number of participants, which is balanced with depth of inquiry--the fewer the participants the deeper the inquiry per individual, and data saturation. Any purposive sampling is justified within the context of a robust study. The criteria or sampling strategy for selecting participants are specified as appropriate to the study. Demographic information related to the population or research site are described, as appropriate to the study.
5. **Ethical Considerations**
The measures taken for ethical protection of participants are clearly explained including risks and benefits. Steps for applying to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) is described.
6. **Data Collection Procedures**
The procedures for data collection are explained in detail. Procedures for gaining access to the site and participants are described. Data collection tools such as interview guides, observation guides, etc. are included in the Appendix section. Choices about the data to be collected are justified. Data collected are appropriate to answer the questions posed in relation to the qualitative approach chosen. How and when the data are to be collected and recorded is described.
7. **Data Management and Organization**
The process used to manage and ensure the integrity of the transcribed data is clearly delineated, including how the data will be stored and securely protected. Content will be dependent on the specific qualitative method used.
8. **Data Analysis**

How and when the data will be analyzed is articulated. Identify the software program if used in the analysis. The coding procedure for reducing information into categories and themes is described as is the data analysis procedures after coding.

9. Role of the Researcher

- a. The role of the researcher is fully described in terms of past/current professional roles at the setting, past/current professional relationships with the participants, and how these past/current roles and relationships are likely to affect data collection.
- b. The researcher's experiences or biases related to the topic are described and measures to monitor and control biases are detailed.

10. Validity and Reliability

Methods to address the trustworthiness of the data are explained.

For Quantitative Studies:

1. An untitled **introduction** section includes a clear outline of the study. The context for the study is described and justified.

2. Research Design

The research design section

- a. includes a detailed description of the research design and approach, to the extent that the study could be replicated by another researcher;
- b. provides justification for using the design and approach;
- c. derives logically from the research problem and the purpose of the study;
- d. clearly articulates dependent, independent, or other variables;
- e. clearly describes, in detail, any interventions/treatments used.

3. Setting and Sample

This section describes and defends

- a. the setting and population from which the sample will be or was drawn;
- b. the sampling method, including the sampling framework used;
- c. the sample size derived through power analysis;
- d. the eligibility criteria for study participants; and
- e. the characteristics of the selected sample.

4. Ethical Considerations

The measures taken for ethical protection of participants are clearly explained including risks and benefits.

5. Instrumentation and Materials

- a. Instrumentation or data collection tools are described and include: the names and the types of instruments, the concepts measured by the instrument, how scores are calculated and its meaning, and the processes needed to complete the instruments by participants.
- b. Assessment of the reliability and validity of the instrument(s) is explained. If the instrument was created by the researcher, data from pilot testing are provided. If an established instrument is used, data from the literature are provided.

6. **Data Collection Procedures**

The steps and processes of the data collection are explained, in detail, and a description of any pilot study procedures are included, as applicable.

7. **Data Analysis**

Note: In the proposal, the plan for data analysis is described. In the dissertation, this is revised to include the initial analysis of the data.

The plan for data analysis describes the:

- a. nature of the scale for each variable,
- b. scoring of the instrument,
- c. selection of the appropriate statistical techniques to be used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses,
- d. assumptions for the selected statistical techniques that will be tested.

For Mixed Method Studies:

1. An untitled **introduction** includes a rationale for the use of mixed methods in a single study.
2. **Research Design**
 - a. Provides justification for using the design and approach;
 - b. Includes a description of the multiple forms of data collection and analysis (concurrent or sequential).
3. Doctoral students should work with their chairperson and committee members to develop and describe the components of the selected mixed methods approach. Guidelines for qualitative and quantitative methods appearing in this document should be used, as appropriate, in the selected mixed methods approach.

Chapter IV. Findings

For Qualitative Studies:

1. The **introduction** is untitled and restates the purpose of the study and the research questions.

2. The **findings**
 - a. build logically from the problem and the research design;
 - b. are presented in a manner that addresses the research questions;
 - c. are consistent with the research questions and the underlying theoretical or conceptual framework of the study.
3. Negative or deviant cases are analyzed and included in the findings.
4. Patterns, relationships, and themes described as findings are supported by the data. The manner in which the analysis of the data occurred is evident. All salient data are accounted for in the findings. **A graphic interpretation of the overall findings is presented.**

For Quantitative Studies:

1. The **introduction** is untitled and restates the purpose of the study and the research questions.
2. The **findings**
 - a. build logically from the problem and the research design;
 - b. are presented in a manner that addresses the research questions or hypotheses, as stated;
 - c. are consistent with the research questions or hypotheses.
3. The sample is described and any preliminary data analysis should be included. Descriptive statistics of all variables in the research design are reported.
4. The data analysis should logically and sequentially address all research questions or hypotheses.
5. The results of the statistical tests are reported by the research questions or hypotheses. Report whether the assumptions have been met for each statistical test used. Discuss solutions employed if the data failed to meet the required assumptions. Tables and graphs are used appropriately to organize the results from the statistical analysis.
6. The results are logically and systematically summarized and interpreted in relation to its importance to the research questions and hypotheses.

For Mixed Method Studies:

1. The **introduction** is untitled and restates the purpose of the study and the research questions.

Data are presented in the appropriate manner for the type of study conducted.

2. The **findings**

- a. build logically from the problem and the research design;
- b. are presented in a manner that addresses the research questions or hypotheses;
- c. are consistent with the research questions or hypotheses and the underlying theoretical/conceptual framework of the study.

Doctoral students should work with their chair and committee to report findings by the guidelines for qualitative and quantitative research appearing in this document, as appropriate, for the selected mixed methods approach.

Chapter V. Conclusions

1. The section begins with a brief overview of why and how the study was done, reviewing the questions or topics being addressed and a brief summary of the findings.
2. The **Discussion of the Findings** includes conclusions that address all of the research questions, and relates the findings to a larger body of literature on the topic, including the theoretical/conceptual framework. This chapter contains references to outcomes in Chapter IV and is bounded by the evidence collected.
3. Discussions of the limitations of the study and its findings are included, as needed.
4. **Implications** of the study's results are described as applicable to the problem and its contributions to the discipline of nursing and are clearly grounded in the significance section of Chapter I and findings presented in Chapter IV. Dependent on the research topic, headings can include:

Recommendations for Practice

Recommendations for Nursing Education

Recommendations for Public Policy

Recommendations for Future Research

5. The chapter closes with a concluding statement related to the overall purpose of the study.

References

The references should include all works cited in the proposal and dissertation. Refer to the *Publication Manual of the APA* for formatting guidelines and examples to accurately cite work in the text and to compile the reference list.

Appendices

The purpose of appendices in the dissertation is similar to that of the proposal except that it may now be expanded to include additional documents or data pertinent to the study that does not lend itself to the text of the document, such as additional tables, figures, IRB letters of approval, recruitment materials, approvals for use of copyrighted tools, surveys, or other forms of data. As stated previously, each appendix is labeled with a capital letter in the order mentioned in the main text. (Refer to the *Publication Manual of the APA* for specific directions.)

Dissertation Proposal Defense Process Flowchart

Chairperson and Committee members approve the proposal for defense.



The **Request for Proposal Defense** is sent to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the requested date(s).

A clean copy of the written dissertation proposal and a power point presentation of the proposal defense is distributed to the committee and Ph.D. Program Coordinator by the student two weeks prior to the defense date.

NOTE: DEFENSES WILL NOT BE SCHEDULED WITHOUT A COPY OF THE FINAL WRITTEN PROPOSAL AND POWER POINT PRESENTATION SUBMITTED AT LEAST TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE REQUESTED DATES.



An invitation to attend the **Proposal Defense** via video conference is sent to the student, chairperson and committee members by the Ph.D. Program Coordinator



Proposal Defense takes place

Recommendations for revisions are made by the dissertation chairperson and committee members at the defense with the dissertation chairperson taking notes to review with the student.



The **Outcome of the Dissertation Proposal and Elevation to Candidacy** is completed by the Ph.D. Program Coordinator forwarded to the dean of the PSN for signature.

If further work on the proposal is required, the student will work under the direction of the chairperson before the IRB application is submitted.

If the proposal is approved, the student submits the IRB application for approval. Upon notification of IRB approval, data collection can begin. Students must be

	enrolled in a course during data collection.
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Dissertation Defense Process Flowchart

Chairperson, in collaboration with the Committee Members, approve the final, defensible dissertation and submits the Notification of Intent: Defense of the Dissertation to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator
A clean copy of the written dissertation and a power point presentation of the final defense is distributed to the committee and the Ph.D. Program Coordinator by the student two weeks prior to the defense date. NOTE: DEFENSES WILL NOT BE SCHEDULED WITHOUT A COPY OF THE FINAL DISSERTATION AND POWER POINT PRESENTATION SUBMITTED AT LEAST TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE REQUESTED DATES.



The Dissertation Defense is scheduled.	
The student, committee chairperson and members are notified by email of the defense date and time.	An invitation to attend the defense via video conference is sent to all attendees. The defense is announced within the Passan School of Nursing and via the daily Wilkes University email (today@wilkes.edu).



The Dissertation Defense takes place with invited guests and the University community present (presentation only).		
Presentation Candidate presents the dissertation research	Question and Answers Candidate answers questions posed by chairperson and committee members	Deliberation Committee deliberates in closed session and the chairperson shares the outcome with the student

Part III: Forms

- Form 1. Contract for Research Commitment
- Form 2. Academic Integrity Dissertation Guidelines
- Form 3. Approval for Appointment of Dissertation Committee: Chair and Members
- Form 4. Request for Proposal Defense
- Form 5. Proposal Defense Procedures
- Form 6. Outcome of the Proposal Defense and Elevation to Doctoral Candidacy
- Form 7. Notification of Intent: Defense of the Dissertation
- Form 8. Final Defense Procedures
- Form 9. Outcome of the Final Dissertation Defense
- Form 10. Sample Signature Page



Wilkes University

PASSAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

**Wilkes University
Passan School of Nursing Ph.D. Program
Student Contract for Research Commitment**

As a Ph.D. student:

I acknowledge my commitment and responsibility to doctoral studies and for the successful completion of my degree.

I will engage in scholarly inquiry and work closely with my dissertation committee chairperson and members toward designing a research study that examines, refines, and advances nursing science and theory to transform nursing education and clinical practice.

I understand I am expected to engage with my dissertation committee chairperson beginning in NSG 620: Seminar I, and continue ongoing development and progression of my dissertation throughout the remainder of my program.

I will advance the epistemology of nursing through the dissemination of my dissertation research findings to the larger community of healthcare practitioners.

I am committed to focusing my dissertation research topic in the area of:

and I will dedicate my efforts to the chosen topic area throughout the curriculum in developing the dissertation research study.

Graduate Student Name

Signature

Date



Wilkes University

PASSAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

**Wilkes University
Passan School of Nursing Ph.D. Program
Academic Integrity – Dissertation Guidelines**

The APA manual is clear regarding the importance of proper citation. Citation gives credit to the authors of original work. It also protects the integrity of research papers. You are researching a topic that is important to you. Your ability to read the work of others provides you with an opportunity to learn from experts in the field. Giving them credit for their contribution is critical. Your work has the potential to build on the knowledge base for others to follow. Accurate citation is essential so that those who follow you will be able to locate your references and accurately cite your work.

The APA manual identifies inaccurate citation as plagiarism. At the doctoral level, you are expected to be proficient in APA citation. From the first draft of your proposal through the completion of your dissertation, the expectation is that all sources will be cited and referenced according to the APA requirements. Failure to cite and reference properly will be treated as an offense of the **Academic Honesty Statement on Academic Honesty, Intellectual Responsibility and Plagiarism Policy** in the Passan School of Nursing Graduate Program Student Handbook.

If you have any questions regarding these expectations, raise them immediately with your dissertation chairperson. Wilkes University Passan School of Nursing takes academic integrity seriously. The doctoral degree signifies the highest level of scholarship and students at this level will be held strictly accountable to the policy.

By signing this form, you are acknowledging that you understand the high expectations for academic integrity at the doctoral level when drafting and writing your dissertation proposal and dissertation and you are agreeing to adhere to these expectations. You are also acknowledging that you are aware of the potential consequences of violations of academic integrity at the doctoral level. This form will become a part of your student record at Wilkes University.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

WIN #: _____



Wilkes University
PASSAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

Ph.D. in Nursing

Approval for Appointment of Dissertation Committee: Chair and Members

Student _____ WIN # _____ Date of Request _____

Directions: This approval form must be signed by the member(s) agreeing to serve and by the chair of the dissertation committee indicating his/her agreement and support. The student is responsible for forwarding this form to the Ph.D. in Nursing program office. NOTE: This form can be resubmitted for approval of committee members if they are not submitted at the time of the approval request for the chair.

The faculty who have signed below have agreed to serve in the capacity indicated.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Member Title	Name	Signature of Member <i>This is required and denotes agreement to serve, if approved.</i>	<i>To be completed by the Ph.D. Program Coordinator indicating approval or denial w/ dates.</i>
1. Chair			
2. Member			
3. Member			
4. Member			

To be signed by the committee chair when members' names (2 and 3 above) are submitted on approval form. A vita or resume is required for a member who is external to Wilkes University. All members must hold terminal degrees.

I support the appointment of the committee members, listed above, to serve on the applicant's dissertation committee.

Dissertation Committee Chair Signature

Date

- ☐ Approved chair _____
- ☐ Approved members _____
- ☐ Denied for the following reasons:

Ph.D. Program Coordinator _____ Date _____

cc: Student, Dissertation Chair



Wilkes University
PASSAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

**Ph.D. in Nursing
Request for Proposal Defense**

- The student and chairperson completes this form and submits it to the Ph.D. in Nursing Program Coordinator no less than two weeks prior to the proposed defense date.
- The Ph.D. Program Coordinator will schedule the proposal defense via video conference.

Student _____ **WIN #** _____ **Date of Request** _____

Chair of Committee:

Committee Member:

Committee Member:

Committee Member:

Title of Proposal:

Committee chair: List three dates and times that all committee members and the student are available.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Date: | Time: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Date: | Time: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Date: | Time: |

Submission of this request to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator verifies that the proposal has been prepared to meet the standards of the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing and has been reviewed, edited for content and APA, and is in its final form for defense.

Signature of Committee Chair:

Date:



Wilkes University
PASSAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

Ph.D. in Nursing Proposal Defense Procedures

Purpose

The proposal defense scheduled during NSG 629: Dissertation Seminar is an oral presentation of the first three (3) chapters of the dissertation and is done via video conferencing. Its purpose is an assessment and evaluation by the dissertation committee to determine if the student's work has academic merit and an appropriate research design given the problem.

Members at Meeting

Student
Committee chairperson
Committee Members
PhD Program Coordinator

Role of the Committee Chairperson

The chairperson convenes the meeting, provides the ground rules, and takes notes of recommendations provided by the committee. The chair, in conjunction with the committee members, determines the outcome of the proposal defense

Procedures

1. Once the student is eligible to defend the proposal, the student and chairperson complete the *Proposal Defense Request* form and submits it to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator of the Passan School of Nursing no less than two weeks prior to the proposed defense date. The Ph.D. Program Coordinator will schedule the proposal defense in the YouSeeU virtual classroom within the NSG 629 course. Students are encouraged to practice their presentation with the chairperson prior to the actual defense.
2. A clean copy of the written proposal and a power point presentation of the proposal will be distributed to the committee and Ph.D. Program Coordinator by the student two weeks prior to the defense date. Students will have approximately thirty (30) minutes to present, followed by a question and answer period. Only the committee members and Ph.D. Program Coordinator may attend the proposal defense.
3. The proposal defense power point presentation is designed using the following headings.
 - Title of the study
 - List of committee members
 - Background of the problem (why is the topic worthy of study?)

- Purpose of the study
 - Research questions/hypotheses (connect the appropriateness of the research questions/hypothesis to the study)
 - Philosophical background (connect the student's philosophical background to the research design)
 - Theoretical framework
 - Significance of the study to nursing science
 - Brief background on existent literature and gaps in the literature
 - Methodology and design, including general statistical strategy if applicable
 - Ethical Considerations
 - References
 - Questions and Answers
4. At the end of the presentation, the student will exit the meeting so the committee can discuss recommendations and determine the status of the proposal (see Outcome of the Proposal Defense and Elevation to Doctoral Candidacy form).
 5. Students submit their IRB application through IRB Mentor contingent on the outcome of the proposal defense. The IRB Mentor software system can be accessed through the Wilkes Portal (portal.wilkes.edu).



Wilkes University
PASSAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

Ph.D. in Nursing
Outcome of the Proposal Defense and Elevation to Doctoral Candidacy

Student _____ **WIN #** _____

Proposal Defense Date:

Title of Dissertation Proposal:

Outcome:

- ☐ **Pass:** The student will proceed to NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I with no revisions.
- ☐ **Pass with Revisions:** The student will have minor revisions to be submitted to the chair within two weeks to receive approval to register for NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I. After confirmation from the chair, the student may immediately proceed to IRB.
- ☐ **Conditional Pass:** The student will have revisions to be submitted to the chair and committee and cannot register for NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I until the revised proposal is accepted by the full committee. The student may not proceed to IRB until the revised proposal is accepted.
- ☐ **Revise and Redefend:** The student will be required to complete major revisions to the proposal and be required to re-defend. The student may not proceed to NSG 630: Dissertation Implementation I and IRB until a successful re-defense occurs.
- ☐ **Fail:** The student will have no opportunity to revise the proposal and will not be permitted to continue in the program.

Chairperson

_____ Date _____

Committee Members

_____ Date _____

_____ Date _____

_____ Date _____

Endorsement for Candidacy to the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing Degree

The above named student has been elevated to candidacy for the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing degree
on _____ of 20_____.

Ph.D Program Coordinator _____

Dean of the Passan School of Nursing _____

cc: Student, Student File



Wilkes University
PASSAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

Ph.D. in Nursing

Notification of Intent: Defense of the Dissertation

Directions: This notification of intent must be completed by the student and signed by each member of the committee indicating their agreement that the dissertation is in its final form and ready for defense. The dissertation chairperson is responsible for forwarding this form to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator for the scheduling of the defense.

Candidate _____ **WIN #** _____ **Date of Request** _____

Title of Dissertation:

I, _____, certify that I am a candidate in good academic standing in the Ph.D. in Nursing program and that my dissertation is in its final form and ready for defense. I am submitting this notification of intent to defend my dissertation during the _____ semester of 20____.

Candidate's Signature _____ **Date** _____

Signatures of Support

Dissertation Chair _____

Committee Member _____

Committee Member _____

Committee Member _____

Possible Defense Dates when candidate and committee are all available:

(List up to 5 dates. Refer to the NSG 631 course calendar)

To be completed by department personnel

Authorization to schedule the Dissertation Defense is hereby given and is tentatively scheduled for _____ of 20 ____.

Ph.D. Program Coordinator

Date



Ph.D. in Nursing Final Defense Procedures

Purpose

To provide dissertation chairperson/committee members a guide to the final defense process. A dissertation defense process flowchart is also available in the PhD Dissertation Guide. It is the responsibility of the chairperson to communicate with the committee members regarding what questions should be asked by each committee member specific to their role, (e.g., content expert, statistical or methodological expertise).

Attendees

Student
Committee chairperson
Committee members
PhD program coordinator
PSON faculty
PhD students
Invitees

Procedures

1. Student and dissertation committee completes **Notification of Intent: Defense of the Dissertation** form (located in PhD Dissertation Guide) and forwards it to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator for the scheduling of the defense.
2. The PhD Program Coordinator will schedule the defense within the NSG 631: Dissertation Implementation II course. All committee members must attend the defense electronically and utilize a camera and microphone. Telephone participation only by committee members is not permitted. The Passan School of Nursing requires all dissertation defenses to be publicized in advance. The presentation is open to faculty from the Passan School of Nursing, other students in the Ph.D. in Nursing Program, and those whom the student wishes to invite.
3. Students have approximately forty-five (45) minutes to present, followed by a question and answer period. At the conclusion of the presentation portion of the defense, audience members may remain for the question and answer session but only the dissertation chairperson and committee members ask questions of the student. After the question and answer session, the student will leave the video conference for the deliberation period. After deliberations conclude, the chairperson shares the outcome with the student.
4. Students should structure the dissertation defense power point presentation around the following information.
 - Title of the study
 - List of committee members
 - Background of the problem
 - Purpose of the study

- Research questions/hypotheses
- Philosophical background
- Theoretical framework
- Significance of the study
- Brief background on existent literature and gaps in the literature
- Methodology and design, including general statistical strategy if applicable
- Ethical Considerations
- Findings
- Integration of the findings with the literature
- Limitations
- Implications for the discipline of nursing
- Recommendations for future research
- Select References

Ground Rules

1. Committee chairperson convenes defense. All committee members introduces themselves.
2. All participants, except student, mute microphones and turn off cameras during presentation.
3. At conclusion of presentation, chairperson directs question and answer session.
4. At conclusion of questions and answer session, student exits meeting. Chairperson will call and/or text student when outcome of the final defense has been determined.
5. Recording of the presentation is not permitted.



Wilkes University

PASSAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

**Ph.D. in Nursing
Outcome of the Final Dissertation Defense**

Student _____ **WIN #** _____

Final Defense Date:

Title of Dissertation Proposal:

Outcome:

- ☐ **Pass:** The student will be recommended for the degree without further revision or examination.
- ☐ **Pass with Revisions:** The student will be recommended for the degree subject to amendments or further revisions to the text, but without further examination.
- ☐ **Conditional Pass:** The student will be recommended for the degree subject to further revision to the text and may be called to defend revisions to satisfy the committee members' questions.
- ☐ **Revise and Redefend:** The student will not yet be recommended for the degree and will receive an incomplete for the course. The student will be permitted to resubmit the dissertation in a revised form and called to defend the dissertation again.
- ☐ **Fail:** The student will not be recommended for the degree and a new dissertation cycle will be suggested or no opportunity for future submission or defense will be granted.

Dissertation Chairperson Date _____

Committee Member Date _____

Committee Member Date _____

Committee Member Date _____

Ph.D. Program Coordinator _____

Sample Signature Page

(Note: This is prepared by the department and only a placeholder page needs to be included by the student.)

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

Dissertation Title

prepared by

Candidate's Full Name

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing at Wilkes University.

Approved by:

<Typed name and credentials – e.g., Deborah Zbegner, PhD, CRNP, WHNP-C> Dean, Passan School of Nursing	Date

<Typed name and credentials – e.g., Robin Chard, PhD, RN, CNOR> PhD Program Coordinator	Date

<Typed name and credentials> Chairperson of Dissertation Committee	Date

<Typed name and credentials> Dissertation Committee Member	Date

<Typed name and credentials> Dissertation Committee Member	Date

<Typed name and credentials> Dissertation Committee Member	Date

Passan School of Nursing
Wilkes University
Month day, year