

Dissertation Information

I. Admission to Candidacy

When the student has successfully passed the comprehensive examination and successfully defended a dissertation proposal, the student will be recommended by the School of Nursing for admission to candidacy for a degree.

II. Continuous Registration

Once a student has met the requirements for admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree, the student is expected to pursue completion of the dissertation without interruption by enrolling every remaining semester for at least three hours of dissertation research until completion of the dissertation. The amount of dissertation research for which a student enrolls in any given semester should be commensurate with the progress a student is expected to make on the dissertation. **All requirements of the degree must be completed within seven years.**

III. Dissertation

A dissertation showing ability to conduct independent research and skill in organization and presentation must be prepared by each student on a nursing education topic. The dissertation must also constitute a definite contribution to knowledge. The dissertation title must be approved by the student's dissertation chair and committee members. A dissertation committee, with the dissertation chair, will supervise the preparation of the dissertation. The dissertation committee shall not have fewer than three members. The following committee forms, [Dissertation Chair Approval](#) and [Dissertation Committee Member Approval](#), are available on the Ed.D. in Nursing Education website. All members of a dissertation committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty. An additional Outside Committee Member may also serve on the dissertation committee with evidence of a terminal degree. Lastly, see the Graduate Programs site for required university editorial guidelines, [Thesis & Dissertation](#), [UWG General Guidelines for Formatting and Processing](#).

IV. Working with a Chair and Committee

Building Student-Chair Relationship

a. Introduction

Finding a match between student interests and faculty member's availability represents both challenges and opportunities. Once a chair selection is made and approved, building a relationship with your chair is critical for success in completing your dissertation. Here are three suggestions:

1. Check with your chair regarding the preferred method of communication,
2. Be ready to type notes and/or tape the session when you schedule

conversations, and;

3. It works best if all communication is channeled through the chair, even if you are working with other members of the dissertation committee on specific issues. This helps to avoid any contradictory information which may slow down progress.

The conceptualization of your study should develop and emerge during dialogue with your chair. It may also help your completion success by anticipating areas that are potentially going to slow down your progress. It is best to consider the following:

1. Plan to allow chair and committee members a **minimum of two weeks** to read various drafts of your work, and;
2. The IRB approval process will take some time. Plan on at least three weeks before your IRB approval. **You cannot collect any data until the IRB has approved your study**, and;
3. Build in extra dissertation preparation time, perhaps twice as much as you anticipate needing, as often unforeseen issues delay some aspect of the dissertation process.

b. How Does a Dissertation Committee Function?

Each member of the committee brings certain strengths and perspective to the student. These strengths may lie in methodological or content-area expertise. Another great strength may be an interest and enthusiasm in assisting your development as a scholar. UWG believes that the student is served best when direction and support are consensual and collaborative. To this end, at times the committee will discuss differences in the presence of the student; whereas other times the committee will choose to resolve differences without the student's presence. At all stages of dissertation development, it works best if the feedback and communication is received by all members of the dissertation committee.

c. General Dissertation Expectations

UWG has established at least four general expectations regarding quality in dissertation work.

First, students writing their dissertation must demonstrate familiarity with the literature in their field. Students must also interpret the literature while offering applications, analysis, and extension of practice.

Second, students will come to the dissertation with some background in research methods. The committee will help students select the most precise method that is appropriate for their study. This may mean pushing students past their previous level of understanding and use of research methods.

Third, committee members guide students through the conclusions of the study section. It is important that the full value of the study be realized and learning how to share their findings is a key outcome for students.

Finally, the committee is expected to provide enough feedback to students to identify areas that are problematic regarding form and style. While the committee *will not act as an*

editor or grammarian, students should receive enough direction to identify necessary resources to assist them. Committees are expected to provide feedback to students so they might know areas in need of correction.

d. What does the committee chair do? The chair:

1. Supports the student with project conceptualization and early drafts,
2. Assumes a primary responsibility for assuring that work fulfills the expectations and requirements of the committee, UWG, and the academic discipline,
3. Leads, monitors, coordinates, and assesses the progress of the dissertation from start to finish,
4. Provides timely and regular feedback,
5. Assists the student with submission of the *IRB*, and;
6. Helps the student develop their own scholarly agenda.

e. What do committee members do? Committee members:

1. Assume a shared responsibility for assuring that the work fulfills the expectations and requirements of the committee, UWG, and the academic discipline,
2. Engage, monitor, refine, and assess the progress of the dissertation from start to finish,
3. Provide timely and regular feedback to the student via the chair's direction, and;
4. Offer direct support to students by complementing academic content and or methodological support.

f. What does the student do? The student:

1. Complies with all rules, procedures, ethical guidelines, and IRB requirements,
2. Communicates in a regular and consistent manner with the chair. Always provides more than adequate time to read drafts and exchange ideas,
3. Accommodates the chair's schedule,
4. Corrects grammatical or APA errors,
5. Learns to accept feedback and constructive criticism, and;
6. Follows through and meets obligations in a timely manner.

g. Frequently asked questions:

1. **Who is responsible to select the dissertation committee chair?** This is a joint decision between the student and the Graduate Faculty, however, the student is primarily responsible and the Graduate Faculty provides advice. Students are encouraged to explore possible chairs amongst Graduate faculty members. Once a tentative decision is made, the [Dissertation Chair Approval](#) form is completed and submitted by the student to the program director.
2. **When do I select my committee chair?** During the first summer of the program, students are welcome to formalize the selection of a dissertation chair. Students should

keep an open mind about methodological procedures and varying expertise offered by potential chairs.

3. **Who selects the members of the dissertation committee?** The Graduate faculty and student have an interest in the selection of committee members. Students are encouraged to explore possible committee members amongst Graduate faculty members. The [Dissertation Committee Member Approval Form](#) is completed when the committee is selected. The chair is responsible to complete the form and submit to the program director.

4. **What should I strive for as far as committee membership?** The most important criterion is a committee member who is willing and committed to helping you develop as a scholar. Ideally, the committee membership should strive to represent both content area and methodological expertise.

5. **How many members serve on a dissertation committee?** Committees will consist of three or potentially four members. If the chair also provides methodological expertise, committees may include only three members.

6. **Where can I find a directory of faculty members?** [Faculty Directory](#)

7. **What are the formatting requirements for my dissertation?**

[Thesis & Dissertation](#), [UWG General Guidelines for Formatting and Processing](#)

8. **What if I want to change my chair or a committee member?** Changing the composition of the dissertation committee should not be taken lightly. Any changes must be discussed and approved by the committee chair, Director, and the Associate Dean. *A strong rationale is required to make a change.*

9. **How many hours of dissertation credit must be taken?** 12 hours

10. **Do I have to enroll for dissertation hours if I want to take a semester off?**

Unless the student has been granted an extraordinary “leave of absence,” the student must enroll in at least one hour of dissertation credit every semester (including summer).

Failure to do so will remove the student from good standing in the program.

11. **What happens when I am ready to defend my dissertation proposal?** The student works with the dissertation chair to determine when the student is ready to defend the dissertation proposal. Please review the [Oral Defense Notification](#) document.

12. **What happens when I am ready to defend my dissertation?** The student works with the dissertation chair to determine when the student is ready to defend the dissertation. Please review the [Oral Defense Notification](#) document for the Final Defense.

13. **What forms are required regarding the dissertation and where are they located?** There are numerous forms and procedures that have been developed to ensure an orderly and systematic progression through the dissertation process. Please review the [Dissertation Forms](#) on the EdD in Nursing Education website.

14. **Who is eligible to serve as a dissertation committee chair or member?**

Any UWG graduate level faculty member with a terminal degree is eligible for consideration to serve on dissertation committees.

15. When do I achieve candidacy? Once a student has successfully passed the comprehensive examination and defended their dissertation proposal, they have achieved candidacy.

16. How long will the dissertation take? This depends on the complexity of your study and the challenges you encounter gathering and analyzing data. The student's personal situation and the amount of time devoted to the dissertation process are also factors. It is possible for you to complete the entire program, including the dissertation, in a little over three years. However, due to the design complexity of some studies, it is not expected that all students will complete in this timeframe.

17. How long do I have to complete my degree? To maintain the integrity of the degree and to ensure current status, *students must complete their degree, including dissertation, within seven years of admission.* After the seven year expiration, students will be forced to reapply to the program and re-take courses if re-admitted.

Rights clause of the SON Graduate handbook:

The Tanner Health System School of Nursing reserves the right to amend, modify, add to, or delete our rules, policies, and procedures.