



**MENNONITE COLLEGE  
OF NURSING**  
*Illinois State University*

**2016-2017**

**Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing  
Student Handbook**

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# **I. Introduction to the MCN**

## **A. History of Mennonite College of Nursing**

Mennonite College of Nursing became Illinois State University's sixth academic college on July 1, 1999. The rich heritage of Mennonite College of Nursing began in 1919. For more than 90 years, the primary mission has been to prepare professional nurses by providing a quality education. This mission continues at Illinois State. Mennonite College of Nursing is located in Edwards Hall.

## **B. Mission, Vision, and Philosophy**

### **1. Mission**

Mennonite College of Nursing at Illinois State University creates a dynamic community of learning to develop exceptionally prepared nurses who will lead to improve health outcomes locally and globally. We promote excellence in teaching, research, service and practice with a focus on the vulnerable and underserved. We are committed to being purposeful, open, just, caring, disciplined and celebrative.

### **2. Vision**

The vision of Mennonite College of Nursing is to be a premier college of nursing dedicated to improving local and global health outcomes.

### **3. Philosophy**

At the heart of the College's philosophy is the belief that all people share a common humanity. Each person must be regarded as having special biological, psychological, sociocultural, and spiritual dimensions and possessing the inherent rights and responsibilities of freedom of choice and self-determination. Based on these beliefs, the College strives to grow as a caring community that supports the development of the total individual.

A vital interactive relationship exists between humankind and the environment. Environment affects each person's biological being and extends beyond physical surroundings to encompass roles, relationships, and societal structures. Because all human beings influence and are influenced by their environment, all must assume the responsibility to protect the social and natural environments in which they share.

Health is a dynamic state influenced by individual, environmental and hereditary factors. State of health, which significantly influences quality of life, is shaped by many factors, including an individual's decision-making and behaviors. Pursuit of wellness is the right and responsibility of each person. Nursing holds the potential to strengthen each human being pursuing optimal health and achieving a harmony of body, mind, and spirit.

Nursing is a profession that continues to evolve through research, theory, and practice. Professional nursing, encompassing a range of therapeutic interventions aimed at promoting and restoring health, addresses actual and potential health care needs of individuals, families, groups, and communities. Nursing care is delivered in diverse settings in a systematic manner through use of the nursing process. In providing their professional services, practitioners of nursing manifest role dimensions that are collaborative and independent in nature. Because dynamic social forces influence the nature and scope of nursing practice, critical thinking, effective communication, and caring are abilities required for professional nursing practice in changing environments.

As a profession, nursing adheres to standards of practice and ethical codes as a means of ensuring quality care for all persons. The current Illinois Nursing and Advanced Practice Nursing Act serve as the legal basis for the practice of nursing in the State of Illinois.

Mennonite College of Nursing is committed to cultivating the personal and professional potential of each member of the College community. The faculty believes that learning as a life-long process is promoted when intellectual inquiry, creativity, self-awareness, self-direction, maturity, and responsibility are valued.

Learning is a process of developing human potential through the interaction of the individual with the environment. This interaction aims to achieve positive attitude changes, knowledge acquisition, and professional competence.

Mennonite College of Nursing provides opportunities for life-long learning and the attainment of the highest level of educational preparation in nursing through its two doctoral programs: the doctor of philosophy (PhD) and the doctor of nursing practice (DNP). These programs represent complementary, alternative approaches to attaining the doctoral degree in nursing.

Mennonite College of Nursing is dedicated to furthering the development of new knowledge for the discipline of nursing and the advancement of nursing practice. The doctor of philosophy degree prepares nurse researchers with expertise in vulnerable populations. The PhD prepared nurse will serve the public health by designing and conducting research on relevant clinical, educational, health systems, and/or health policy topics. The PhD prepared nurse may pursue a research career in the academic, business, government, or industrial setting. PhD prepared nurses may also serve as educators and/or administrators and develop or consult on health care policy in a variety of settings.

Mennonite College of Nursing is also dedicated to the preparation of expert clinicians and leaders. As a practice-focused doctoral program, the doctor of nursing practice (DNP) program focuses on practice that is innovative and evidence-based, reflecting the application of credible research findings. Nurses prepared at the doctoral level with a blend of clinical, organizational, economic, health care improvement, and leadership skills will serve as clinical and/or administrative leaders in healthcare systems. DNP prepared nurses may also serve as educators in a variety of settings.

### C. MCN Administrative Organization and PhD Support Staff

Name	Edwards Hall Room	Telephone	E-mail
Dean Neubrandner, Ed.D., FNP-BC	Judy Dean's Suite 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor	Susan Lynch 438-2174	<a href="mailto:slynch@ilstu.edu">slynch@ilstu.edu</a>
Associate Dean Catherine Miller, EdD, RN, CNE	H. Dean's Suite 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor	Heather Winfrey-Richman 438-2176	<a href="mailto:hwinfre@ilstu.edu">hwinfre@ilstu.edu</a>
Graduate Program Coordinator Caroline Mallory, PhD, RN	303	438-2659	<a href="mailto:cmmallo@ilstu.edu">cmmallo@ilstu.edu</a>
Undergraduate Program Coordinator Kim Astroth, PhD, RN	303	438-2367	<a href="mailto:kmastro@ilstu.edu">kmastro@ilstu.edu</a>
Assistant Dean, Office of Student & Faculty Services Janeen Mollenhauer, MS, LCPC	112 K	438-2417	<a href="mailto:jrmolle@ilstu.edu">jrmolle@ilstu.edu</a>
Associate Director, Business & Finance Diane Folken	308	438-2247	<a href="mailto:dmfolke@ilstu.edu">dmfolke@ilstu.edu</a>
Associate Director, Public Relations Amy Irving	321	438-7418	<a href="mailto:amirvin@ilstu.edu">amirvin@ilstu.edu</a>
Associate Director, Technology Chris Morgan	102	438-2637	<a href="mailto:crmorga@ilstu.edu">crmorga@ilstu.edu</a>
Academic Advisor/Transcultural Coordinator Melissa Moody, MS	112 J	438-7035	<a href="mailto:mkmoody@ilstu.edu">mkmoody@ilstu.edu</a>
Clinical Practice Coordinator Tricia Wiegner	303 A	438-1403	<a href="mailto:tnwieng@ilstu.edu">tnwieng@ilstu.edu</a>

## II. Overview of the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing

### A. Values

Mennonite College of Nursing is proud to be a part of Illinois State University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University institution. The PhD in nursing is congruent with the University mission to provide doctoral education in an area of programmatic strength and to meet the compelling need for doctoral prepared nurses in and out of the academic setting.

Mennonite College of Nursing supports ISU's strategic plan *Educating Illinois*, <http://www.educatingillinois.ilstu.edu/>, with a belief that doctoral education for nurses must reflect the values of Illinois State University, including individualized attention, public opportunity, active pursuit of learning and scholarship, diversity, and innovation. Mennonite College of Nursing espouses complementary values consistent with the discipline of nursing, including altruism, autonomy, human dignity, integrity, and social justice. The doctor of philosophy in nursing expands on the University and College values in the following ways:

- Immersion in the research-intensive environment is an important component for the development of the novice researcher.
- The process of becoming a researcher is greatly dependent upon the mentor – protégé relationship, particularly between student and dissertation advisor. Frequent and constructive interaction between faculty and students is crucial for the development of the novice researcher.
- The development of a peer network contributes to long-term collaborative relationships important for research. An environment that promotes professional collaboration between students is valued.
- The curriculum will be accessible to all qualified students.
- The curriculum and research experiences will reflect individual student interests within defined focus areas in which there are faculty experts to mentor students.
- Learning and scholarship at the doctoral level require a high degree of student motivation and ability. Selection criteria for admission will assure that students are capable of successfully completing the program of study.

### B. Program Outcomes

The PhD in nursing science prepares the nurse to:

- Lead the development of science to advance effective practice, education, and health care policy
- Serve the evolving healthcare interests of humankind through the integration of research, teaching, practice, and service
- Educate, mentor, and guide the next generation of clinicians, researchers, policy-makers, and educators
- Lead and collaborate across disciplines to promote scholarship, teaching, mentoring, practice, and service

### C. Focal Areas

Mennonite College of Nursing will offer students the opportunity to become beginning researchers in a focal area defined by faculty expertise. While the PhD program has a general emphasis on vulnerable populations, within this context more specific foci will be available.

### D. PhD Program Degree Requirements

The doctor of philosophy in nursing program consists of 66 semester hours beyond the Master's Degree distributed among core (21 semester hours), focus (12 semester hours), statistics (9 semester hours), cognate courses (9 semester hours, 400 – 500 level) and a dissertation (15 semester hours). All students must successfully complete a dissertation comprised of original research. Required coursework is usually completed within two to three years, followed by the comprehensive exam and approval of dissertation proposal at which time the student is admitted to candidacy. The student completes one to two years of dissertation work followed by the dissertation defense for graduation. The PhD program is based on national expectations and competencies for graduates of research focused doctoral programs in nursing as stated by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. All courses applied to the degree must be completed at the graduate level. Mennonite College of Nursing requires that any student

receiving a grade of C or below in graduate coursework must repeat the course. A maximum of 3 semester hours may be repeated.

## E. Courses and Sequencing for the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing

### 1. Overview

Upon admission to the PhD program, a plan of study comprised of all required coursework, a timeframe for comprehensive exam, and dissertation is developed between the student and the Graduate Program Advisor. The plan of study will be shared with the student's assigned faculty advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator. The plan of study will be reviewed each year at the student's annual review. Any revisions to the plan of study must be approved by the Graduate Programs advisor as well as the student's faculty advisor. That plan must be revised, signed, and resubmitted for the student's official file.

When selecting courses, students need to be aware that the cognate courses must be taken at the 400-500 level and an Independent Study course must be taken at the 500 level. Credit hour to work load requirements for Independent Study, NUR 500 and Research in Residency, NUR 526 are defined as one academic credit hour is equal to a minimum of 45 hours of work. For example, enrolling in 3 credit hours of NUR 526, would require the student spend a minimum of 135 hours of work to complete the academic hour requirements.

### 2. PhD Program Course Work

Students who hold a Master's degree in nursing are eligible for this program. A minimum of 66 credit hours is required for degree completion.

#### REQUIRED CORE COURSES (7 courses, 21 credit hours)

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 501	Philosophy of Science	3
NUR 503	Theory Develop, Analysis & Evaluation	3
NUR 505	Quantitative Research	3
NUR 507	Qualitative Research	3
NUR 509	Introduction to Nursing Informatics	3
NUR 511	Health Policy	3
NUR 513	Ethical, Legal & Professional Issues	3

#### REQUIRED FOCAL AREA COURSES (4 courses, 12 credit hours)

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 520	Biopsychological Research in Aging	3
NUR 522	Sociocultural Research in Aging	3
NUR 524	Research with Vulnerable Aging Populations	3
NUR 526	Residency in Research with Aging Adults	3



### RESEARCH METHODS/STATISTICS SEQUENCE (3 courses, 9 credit hours)

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 540	Statistical Methods I	3
NUR 541	Statistical Methods II	3
NUR 542	Statistical Methods III	3

### COGNATE COURSES (courses selected by student and faculty advisor) (9 credit hours)

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>

### DISSERTATION HOURS (15 credit hours)

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 599	Dissertation	

### Colloquium (0 credit hours)

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 530	Research Colloquium	

### 3. Sample Plan of Study, see website:

<http://nursing.illinoisstate.edu/doctoral/plan-of-study.php>

### 4. Forms and Documentation Associated with PhD Program

All forms that must be used by the PhD student at various time during their programs are located at the PhD program website, under the Advising tab, and then linked under Forms:

<http://nursing.illinoisstate.edu/doctoral/advising/> Some additional forms related to Dissertation may be found at the Graduate School website: <http://grad.illinoisstate.edu/academics/forms/>

Please reference and take note of their location.

### F. Graduate Statistics Requirement

Statistics preparation is an expectation of incoming PhD students. Students may either take a statistics placement exam to determine what statistics course they will begin in, or start in the Master's level statistics course, NUR 409, the summer before beginning the PhD program coursework.

The placement exam covers content from the Master's level statistics course such as descriptive statistics, probability, normal distribution, hypothesis testing, correlation, regression, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Students who obtain below 80% on the placement exam will take NUR 409 in the summer before beginning the PhD program. Students who score 80% or above on the placement exam can begin the sequence of PhD statistics courses. These students need to speak with their faculty advisor for the placement. The placement exam must be completed within one year prior to the first summer of enrollment in the PhD program. This timeline is to ensure that the student can enroll in the graduate level statistics course in the first summer of the program if completion of the placement exam is below 80%.

The student may only take the placement exam one time to show proficiency. If the student does not show 80% proficiency on the first placement exam, the student will be required to register for NUR 409 the first summer of the PhD program or an equivalent course. The placement exam will be taken on the ISU campus and will be proctored by a MCN staff member. Students who wish to take the exam may schedule a time to do so by calling the, Office of Student and Faculty Services, 309-438-7400.

Course currency requirement for graduate level statistics is one year from the start of the PhD program. If a student successfully completed NUR 409 or a graduate level statistics transferrable equivalent within one year of beginning the PhD program, they will have met the graduate level statistics course requirement. If the student successfully completed a graduate level statistics course but it was taken more than one year ago, the student may choose to take the statistics placement exam to demonstrate proficiency as noted above or they may enroll in NUR 409 and audit the course. If the student completes the placement exam but fall below the 80%, they will be required to enroll in NUR 409. Requirements for auditing the course are the same as for a student taking the course for a grade, full participation to include successful passing of exams is required to demonstrate proficiency. Auditing a course does not impact the GPA as no letter grade is assigned.

#### **Statistics Course Description**

- NUR 409: Understanding Statistics  
Introduction to basic concepts, issues, and procedures related to descriptive and inferential statistics.
- NUR 540: Statistical Methods I  
Introduction to advanced statistical processing and statistical decision making through SPSS
- NUR 541: Statistical Methods II  
Examination and application of advanced analysis of variance and regression analysis
- NUR 542: Statistical Methods III  
Examination and application of Multivariate data analysis and special topics

### **G. Writing Competency**

To ensure that students in the PhD program have the required writing competency skills needed for success in the program, the college provides writing workshops at specified dates and times during academic year which all students are required to participate. Please speak with your faculty advisor about this opportunity.

### **H. Required On-Campus Visits**

Students will be required to attend courses on the Illinois State University campus. New students will also be required to attend a one to two day orientation on campus prior to the start of the program. Details about the orientation will be included in acceptance letters or by email.

### **I. Collegiate Expectations**

Students enrolled in the PhD program are expected to attend events in the college and university that contribute to professional and academic development.

### **J. Research Colloquium**

Students are expected to attend the research colloquium each semester except for summer term. Topics include presentations of original research, peer review of grants, and other research related topics.

### **K. Comprehensive Exam**

#### **1. Purpose**

All students are required to complete a comprehensive examination, consisting of a written and an oral section, for admission to candidate status. The comprehensive examination is designed to determine the student's ability to synthesize the doctoral curriculum and readiness to conduct dissertation research.

The comprehensive exam is based on the American Association of Colleges of Nursing quality indicators for a comprehensive examination in a research-focused doctoral program. Successful completion of the comprehensive exam and advancement to candidacy requires the student to demonstrate basic knowledge of the:

- Historical and philosophical foundations to the development of nursing knowledge;
- Existing and evolving substantive nursing knowledge;
- Methods and processes of theory/knowledge development;
- Research methods and scholarship appropriate to inquiry; and
- Development related to roles in academic, research, practice or policy environments (AACN, 2001)

## 2. Scheduling and Organization

Students are normally ready to participate in the comprehensive exam after completion, or near completion, of course work. The student must also be in good academic standing, as outlined in the Graduate catalog, and making satisfactory progress towards meeting benchmarks. When this point of study has been reached, the student will initiate the process of organizing the comprehensive exam.

A minimum of two calendar months before the requested date for the exam, students must complete a Comprehensive Examination Registration form, secure signatures from faculty members who agree to serve on the comprehensive exam committee and submit a dissertation outline (see below). All forms can be found on the MCN website. Go to Academics tab, PhD tab, and then Advising tab where Forms are linked at the bottom of the page.

- The comprehensive exam committee will be comprised of 3-5 members. At least three of the committee members shall be full members of the Graduate Faculty from Mennonite College of Nursing. Students may invite up to 2 other qualified internal or external individuals to serve on the committee, such as faculty members from other disciplines, researchers in the private and public sectors, and faculty from other institutions. Qualified faculty will have expertise in methods, topical area, target population, or some other aspect of the student's research topic. At least one of the committee members must have expertise in statistics and/or research methodology. All committee members must have the terminal degree or equivalent and sufficient expertise to warrant their inclusion on the committee. Proposed committee members who are not members of the ISU Graduate Faculty must be approved by the ISU Director of Graduate Studies which can be accomplished by completing the Request for Comprehensive Exam Committee Exception form.
  - If the student wishes to change one or more committee members, they must complete a Change of Comprehensive Exam Committee form and obtain the required signatures.
  - All forms will then be submitted together to the MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services and placed in the student's file.
  - The student will forward to OSFS a hard copy and an electronic copy of a 1-2 page outline of their dissertation topic including purpose, specific aims, theory or philosophical underpinning, target population and proposed design and method. The outline should include a title page and a bibliography.
  - OSFS will forward an electronic-copy of the dissertation outline and the student's plan of study to the committee members to assist them in preparing exam questions, and will keep a copy in the student's file.
  - The Assistant to the Graduate Program Coordinator will assist reserving necessary space for the oral defense portion of the exam.

## 3. Exam Questions

The comprehensive exam committee members will write three exam questions based on the AACN quality indicators noted above. The Committee Chair in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator will review proposed questions to ensure consistency and inclusion of core and supportive content material.

- The MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services will send the questions to the student via email by 8:00 a.m. CST on the date agreed upon to start the exam. The student must confirm that they received the questions by 12:00 p.m. CST of the same day. If the student does not respond by 12:00 p.m., the MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services will attempt to contact the student via telephone or email to confirm receipt.

- The student must answer the questions using a maximum of 15 pages for each answer (exclusive of title page, appendices and references) and return the answers via email or in person to the Mennonite College of Nursing Office of Student and Faculty Services no later than 4:00 p.m. CST of the 14th day after receiving the questions (the day the questions are received is counted as day one). Each answer must be in APA format and include a title page and reference list. Appendices are optional, but may be used to include materials such as figures, tables, copies of instruments, photographs, etc. that are pertinent to the answer.
- Upon receiving the answers, the MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services will record in the student file the date the answers were received and forward the answers to each committee member.
- If the student fails to return the answers to MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services within 14 days, a failing grade will be assigned.
- If the student needs an extension to complete the exam, the student must contact the Committee Chair and the Graduate Program Coordinator to discuss the situation prior to the deadline. Granting of an extension is based on individual situations, but normally is associated with extenuating circumstances. A request for additional time to complete the exam, alone, is not a valid reason for an extension.

#### 4. Evaluation

##### *Evaluation of the Written Portion of the Exam*

- The Committee Chair will coordinate a review of the answers to the written portion of the exam.
- All committee members will read every response. Two committee members will be primary reviewers for each question. Each question will have at least one reviewer who is a faculty member at MCN with a terminal degree in the discipline of nursing.
- If both reviewers agree that the student satisfactorily answered the question, then a passing mark is conferred.
- If the primary reviewers disagree on the quality of the answer, another committee member will be assigned to evaluate the question. A final decision will be based on a majority vote of the three reviewers.

##### *Evaluation of the Oral Portion of the Exam (oral defense)*

- The oral defense will serve as an opportunity for committee members to seek clarification, additional detail, and to guide students' preparation for dissertation work.
- The oral portion of the exam will be scheduled approximately two weeks following submission of answers to the exam questions.
- Prior to the oral defense, the committee members will discuss the student's answers to the written portion of the exam and agree on an outline of questions and clarifications for the oral exam.

#### 5. Evaluation Results

- The committee members will meet immediately after completion of the oral defense to evaluate the student's performance.
- Upon reaching a consensus, the committee will immediately inform the student of the exam results.
- If the committee determines the written examination to be insufficient to progress to oral, then a result is recorded as described below.
- The committee chair will complete Report of Comprehensive Exam form submit accordingly.
- Exam results will be one of the following:
  - Pass: No additional work required to begin work on dissertation. At this time, the student must request signatures from the committee members on the Report of Comprehensive Exam form. The signed form must then be submitted to the Graduate Program Office Support Associate who will make a copy for the student and place the original in the student's file.
  - Pass Conditional: The student will be asked to revise any question(s) of concern and re-submit the revision to the committee on a date to be determined by the committee chair. Two committee members will be assigned to re-evaluate the answer. The student may also be asked to provide additional oral defense for the revisions.
  - Fail: The student will be required to re-take the comprehensive exam following remediation. The Committee Chair will meet with the student to coordinate remediation

which may include additional coursework, scheduled meetings with the student's advisor, etc.

Students who do not pass may repeat the exam for a total of three attempts. Any student who fails to pass on the third attempt or declines to retake the exam is ineligible to progress in the program and will be academically dismissed from the program.

## 6. Sample Qualifying Examination

### Directions:

Students will find a thorough description of the comprehensive exam policy in the PhD Student Handbook in section XIII. Please review this section to ensure that you are in compliance with the policy and understand your rights and responsibilities with regard to the comprehensive examination.

You will have received these questions from the Office of Student and Faculty Services by email by 8:00 a.m. CST on the date agreed upon to start the exam. Be sure that you have confirmed receipt of the questions no later than 12:00 p.m. CST today. If you have not responded to the MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services by 12:00p.m. we will attempt to contact you by telephone and email to confirm receipt.

You must answer all three questions using a maximum of 15 pages for each answer (exclusive of title page, appendices and references) and return the answers via email or in person to the Mennonite College of Nursing Office of Student and Faculty Services no later than 4:00 p.m. CST of the 14th day after receiving the questions (the day the questions are received is counted as day one). Answers to the questions must be in APA format. Upon receiving the answers, the MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services will record in your file the date the answers were received and forward the answers to each committee member. If you fail to return the answers to MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services within 14 days, a failing grade will be assigned.

If you need an extension to complete the exam, you must contact your Committee Chair and the Graduate Program Coordinator to discuss the situation prior to the deadline. Granting of an extension is based on individual situations, but normally is associated with extenuating circumstances. The need for additional time is not a valid reason for an extension.

Please answer the following questions (Question stems in italics reflect standard expectations for students regardless of dissertation topic).

1. Functional decline among older adults with dementia places a considerable burden on family caregivers.
  - a. *What is the scope and seriousness of the problem* of caregiver burden as it relates to functional decline associated with dementia in older adults?
  - b. *What is known and unknown* about caregiver burden in relation to dementia in older adults?
  - c. *What concepts, theories, or conceptual frameworks help us understand, measure or test hypotheses related to the phenomenon* of caregiver burden in relation to dementia and functional decline in older adults?
  - d. *What public policies and/or ethical considerations are there in relation to* caregiver burden, dementia and functional decline in older adults?
  - e. *What biological, social, cultural and psychological factors are likely to be influencing* caregiver burden, dementia and functional decline in older adults?
  - f. *What are the most pressing research questions in the area of* caregiver burden and dementia in older adults?
  
2. Design a **quantitative study** to answer one of the research questions that you think needs to be answered next about caregiver burden, dementia and functional decline in older adults.
  - a. *In brief, what are the philosophic underpinnings of the method?*
  - b. *What design are you proposing and why?*
  - c. *What are the purpose and specific aims of the study?*

- d. *How will you approach sampling, recruitment, measurement, and data collection?*
  - e. *What is the statistical analysis plan for each specific aim?*
  - f. *What practices would you institute to safeguard human subjects?*
  - g. *What are the strengths and limitations of this approach addressing internal and external validity and what alternative approaches would address any limitations?*
3. Design a **qualitative study** to answer one of the research questions that you think needs to be answered next about caregiver burden, dementia and functional decline in older adults.
- a. *In brief, what are the philosophic underpinnings of the method?*
  - b. *What design are you proposing and why?*
  - c. *What are the purpose and specific aims of the study?*
  - d. *How will you approach sampling, recruitment, and data collection?*
  - e. *How will you manage the data and what will be the plan for analysis for each specific aim?*
  - f. *What practices would you institute to safeguard human subjects?*
  - g. *What are the strengths and limitations of this approach in terms of assuring trustworthiness of findings and what might be an alternative approach to address any limitations?*

Suggested Guidelines for Evaluating the Comprehensive Exam

Evaluation Criteria	Outcome: Pass, Conditional Pass, Fail
<p>Question One</p> <p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem statement clearly articulated.</li> <li>• Scope and seriousness of the problem are clearly outlined with contributing epidemiological data supporting the significance of the problem.</li> </ul> <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated and evaluative summary of pertinent literature.</li> <li>• Review is organized logically and systematically.</li> <li>• Relevancy and currency of the literature is documented.</li> <li>• Evidence of the relationship of the literature to the problem is clearly established.</li> <li>• Clear identification of gaps in knowledge base</li> </ul> <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected framework/concepts/theories is/are appropriate.</li> <li>• The relationship of the selected framework/concepts/theories and problem is/are well established via literature support.</li> <li>• The framework/concepts/theories guide the development of the study</li> </ul> <p>D.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly identifies contemporary policy and/or ethical issues surrounding the topic and how these relate to conducting research in this area.</li> </ul> <p>E.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biological, psychological, social and cultural factors related to the phenomenon are identified and their influence on research design articulated</li> </ul> <p>F.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research questions posed are answerable, feasible and accurately reflect the state of knowledge/science about the phenomenon under study</li> <li>• Research questions align with the scope and seriousness of the problem</li> <li>• Research questions lead logically to design and method</li> </ul>	

<p>Question Two</p> <p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies contemporary philosophical precepts regarding epistemology, ontology and the link to quantitative methodology</li> </ul> <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design is stated, a rationale for selection provided</li> <li>Design is likely to answer the research question</li> </ul> <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purpose clearly stated</li> <li>Specific aims align with identified gaps in the science, are researchable, feasible and congruent with the choice of method</li> </ul> <p>D.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies the target population</li> <li>Sampling procedures congruent with design</li> <li>Recruitment measures are pragmatic and lead to access to target population</li> <li>Measures are well described, and reliable and valid reflections of the selected framework/concepts/theories</li> <li>Data Collection and management procedures are thorough and congruent with proposed measures</li> </ul> <p>E.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed data analysis is congruent with specific aims/hypotheses/questions and measures</li> </ul> <p>F.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human subjects protections are thorough and specific to the target population</li> </ul> <p>G.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengths and limitations of the study design in relation to internal and external validity are articulated and alternative approaches are discussed</li> </ul>	
<p>Question Three</p> <p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies contemporary philosophical precepts regarding epistemology, ontology and the link to the qualitative methodology</li> </ul> <p>B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design is stated, a rationale for selection provided</li> <li>Design is likely to answer the research question</li> </ul> <p>C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purpose clearly stated</li> <li>Specific aims align with identified gaps in knowledge, are researchable, feasible and congruent with the choice of method</li> </ul> <p>D.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies the target population</li> <li>Sampling procedures congruent with design</li> <li>Recruitment measures are pragmatic and lead to access to target population</li> <li>Data collection approaches and management procedures are congruent with the design/method</li> </ul> <p>E.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed data analysis is congruent with specific aims/hypotheses/questions and data characteristics</li> </ul> <p>F.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human subjects protections are thorough and specific to the target population</li> </ul> <p>G.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengths and limitations of the study design related to trustworthiness are articulated and alternative approaches are discussed</li> </ul>	



General Characteristics of the Exam	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity and logic of the student's presentation</li> <li>• Ability to conceptualize, analyze, and synthesize knowledge from a nursing perspective</li> <li>• Capacity for original thought, theoretical and professional sophistication, research expertise, and substantive knowledge</li> <li>• Depth of understanding of the phenomena of interest</li> <li>• Competence in communicating (parsimony, clarity, and accuracy of language) and defending ideas and/or positions</li> <li>• Selects significant literature, including classic and current articles to support ideas</li> </ul>	
Format	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct APA format</li> <li>• Writing is clear and logically organized</li> <li>• Correct grammar, spelling and sentence structure</li> <li>• Maximum of 45 pages not including title, references and appendix</li> </ul>	
Overall Decision	

Comments

## L. Candidacy

Students are admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree when they have:

- Completed or near completed course work as evidenced on a plan of study form;
- Successfully completed the comprehensive exam;
- Approval of dissertation proposal;

### 1. Candidacy Documentation

Documentation of completion of candidacy requirements:

- Mennonite College of Nursing Doctor of Philosophy Plan of Study Form
  - The student will work with the Graduate Programs advisor and their faculty advisor to complete the plan of study early in the program. A temporary copy may be used during the student's coursework, but the official document must be completed at the beginning of the semester in which the student plans to graduate.
  - At the beginning of this final semester, the student must verify accuracy of the plan of study, and return the form to the MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services.
  - The paper copy will be kept in the student file and the electronic degree audit will be emailed to the Graduate School
- Successful completion of the comprehensive examination
  - Immediately following the oral defense of the comprehensive exam, the committee will inform the student of the results. Upon passing the exam, the student must request signatures from all committee members on the Report of Comprehensive Exam Completion form.
  - The student will then return the signed Report of Comprehensive Exam Completion forms to the MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services.
  - The MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services will make a copy for the student and a copy for the student's file.
  - The original Report of Comprehensive Exam form will be submitted to the ISU Graduate School.
- Approval for the dissertation proposal
  - Once the dissertation committee approves the student's dissertation proposal, the ISU Proposal Approval Form for Research Leading to a Doctoral Dissertation or Master's Thesis must be completed.

- The student should complete the form and obtain the necessary signatures.
- The student should forward the original to the Graduate School Office, Hovey 309. The Graduate School will image a completed and approved form and route it back to the student, the committee chair, and the academic advisor as an email attachment. This email and all correspondence on this should come from [dissert@ilstu.edu](mailto:dissert@ilstu.edu). Graduate School will also send a copy of the imaged form to the Registrar's Office to be kept in the student's file.

Steps for completion of degree, and a timeline for completing requirements, can be found at <http://grad.illinoisstate.edu/academics/graduation/>.

- Completion of Dissertation and Dissertation Defense
  - The student must have successfully completed and defended the dissertation and the final copy of the dissertation must be on file with the ISU Graduate School office by the designated deadlines published by the Graduate School.

## M. Dissertation

### 1. Purpose

All students are expected to design, conduct, and disseminate original research with the guidance of an experienced researcher. Successful completion of the dissertation is the culmination of course work, residency, any required research and teaching assistantships, and other related learning opportunities. The dissertation marks the beginning of a well thought out program of research designed to contribute to the health and well-being of vulnerable populations. Conferring of the doctor of philosophy degree depends on successful completion of a high quality dissertation and passing the oral defense of the dissertation. Students should read carefully the Illinois State University Graduate School guidelines for writing and defending the dissertation, and follow university deadlines. <http://grad.illinoisstate.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation/>

### 2. Dissertation Hours

Students may enroll in dissertation hours only after having completed the majority of their program coursework and successful passing of comprehensive exam.

### 3. Committee Selection

Ideally, students are matched with a faculty advisor upon admission to the program, and that faculty advisor will serve as the student's dissertation advisor and chair of the dissertation committee. Selection of the dissertation advisor/chair is the student's responsibility in collaboration with PhD Program Staff.

Initial discussion of committee selection will occur during the annual review following completion of the first 18 semester hours of course work. At this time, the faculty advisor and student will define the dissertation topic, propose preliminary research questions, and determine potential candidates to serve on the dissertation committee.

The dissertation committee will be comprised of at least four members. The student will work with the dissertation advisor/chair to select a minimum of three tenured or tenure-track graduate faculty members from within the college of nursing to serve on the committee. Students may invite other qualified internal or external individuals to serve on the committee, such as faculty members from other disciplines, researchers in the private and public sectors, and faculty from other institutions.

Qualified faculty will be full or associate graduate faculty and have expertise in methods, topical area, target population, or other aspect of the student's dissertation topic. At least one of the committee members must have expertise in statistics and/or research methodology. The chair and a majority of the committee must be full members of the Graduate Faculty from Mennonite College of Nursing. All committee members must have the terminal degree or equivalent and sufficient expertise to warrant their inclusion on the committee.

Proposed committee members who are not members of the ISU Graduate Faculty must be approved by the ISU Director of Graduate Studies. This request for exception is made on the Graduate School's Dissertation Proposal form.

Selection of dissertation committee members should be completed by the student's second year of course work. Students must complete a Request for Appointment of Dissertation Committee form and secure signatures from their advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator. If a student wishes to change their committee, they must complete the Request to Change Dissertation Committee form and submit to their advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator.

#### 4. Proposal

The dissertation proposal is the guiding document for conducting dissertation research and must convince the committee that the student is ready to proceed with the research.

- The student is responsible for organizing all required meetings necessary to gain approval of the dissertation proposal, i.e. dates, times, and locations.
- The dissertation committee as a whole will meet with the student at least twice prior to proposal approval.
  - The first meeting should occur following the student's completion of 36 semester hours for the purpose of approving the dissertation topic, providing structured guidance on development of the dissertation proposal, and clarifying the role of each member of the committee.
  - The second meeting will serve to evaluate the student's progress in developing the dissertation proposal.
- Approval of the dissertation proposal and successful passing of the comprehensive exam are required before students begin their dissertation research.
- The dissertation committee determines the format and critical elements that must be present in the proposal.
- Dissertation proposals may take the form of grant proposals, institutional review board proposals, traditional three chapters, or some other format that meets the expectations of the committee. Proposals typically contain a literature review, scope of the problem, theoretical framework, design and methods.
- The student will work with the committee to develop consecutive drafts of the proposal until the committee is satisfied that the student is competent to begin conducting research for the dissertation.
- The committee must approve the proposal and choice of format (three-paper option or traditional dissertation). At the Proposal meeting the Proposal Approval form must be signed by committee. Student will file the Proposal Approval form with committee signatures and IRB approval along with the Copyright Checklist to the Graduate School in accordance with the designated deadlines. <http://grad.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/ProposalApproval.pdf>. "The dissertation for the PhD must involve independent research and an original contribution to knowledge." (ISU Graduate Catalog, 2014-2016; p. 35).
- Prior to the start of dissertation research, institutional policy requires that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) review all research with humans. Research involving animals must be reviewed by the Institutional Animal Care and Use committee (IACUC). The Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) must review research involving biohazards.
- The MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services will submit the Admission to Candidacy form to ISU Graduate School according to stated deadlines.
- Students who have had their dissertation proposal approved are expected to present their proposal in a scholarly venue such as N530 - Colloquium, MCN Noon-time Seminar Series, ISU Graduate Symposium or professional conference.

#### 5. Copyright and Permissions on Dissertations

- It is the responsibility of the student to obtain written permission, when required, from a copyright holder to include borrowed material in their dissertation. The Dean of University Libraries, is the designated copyright agent for Illinois State University. Faculty, staff, and students at Illinois State University should use the Copyright Authority Checklist provided <http://illinoisstate.libguides.com/libguides/Copyright/copyright/checklisttips>, and contact

the designated copyright officer to determine whether a consultation and/or permissions letters will be required before the Right to Defend deadline.

## 6. Dissertation Format

With approval of their dissertation committee, the student may choose either a traditional five (or more) chapter format or a three-paper option. Detailed information about dissertation organization may be found in the *Guide for Writers of Doctoral Dissertations*, available from the Graduate School office, and specific formatting information is available on the ISU Graduate School web site at <http://grad.illinoisstate.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation/>.

For students choosing the three-paper option, the following guidelines apply.

- Papers must be from the student's original dissertation research
- Examples of papers include, but are not limited to, a review of literature, concept analysis, methods or measurement, reports of major or minor findings
- Two out of the three papers must be submitted to a journal that has also been approved by the student's Dissertation Chair prior to graduation
- Each paper, whether submitted for publication or not, must be a polished and complete draft

For students choosing the traditional dissertation option, the following guidelines apply.

- Students choosing this option are still required to submit two manuscripts for publication as outlined by program benchmarks
- The entirety of the dissertation must be a complete and polished manuscript

The student will work primarily with their Dissertation Chair to carry out the research and prepare drafts of the completed dissertation. The Chair is responsible for determining the student's readiness to defend the dissertation, determining deadlines for dissertation drafts, and setting the date for the oral defense.

## 7. Review of the Dissertation

Faculty are in agreement that the dissertation is the ultimate scholarly product and characterizes the doctor of philosophy (AAUP, 2005). As such, it requires considerable attention by the dissertation committee and student to ensure that it meets or exceeds minimum standards. The Dissertation Review Rubric below outlines the required elements of the dissertation and the level of competency required for approval by the dissertation committee. The rubric may be used to review each paper in the three-paper option or the traditional dissertation.

### Dissertation Review Rubric Mennonite College of Nursing, Illinois State University

Student				
Committee Member				
Date				
<b>Abstract</b>		Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Not Applicable
Abstract contains a concise description of the study, a brief statement of the problem, exposition of methods and procedures, and a summary of findings and implications.				
Comments				
		Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Introduction</b>	Demonstrates that the focus of the study is on an important clinical problem that is worthy of study			
	Describes the purpose of the study in a logical, explicit manner.			

	The Nature of the Study, Specific Research Question, Hypotheses, or Research Objectives are briefly and clearly described.			
	The Significance of the study is described in terms of knowledge generation and professional application			

Comments

		Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Literature Review</b>	The review of related research and literature is clearly related to the problem statement as expressed in: a. Research questions and hypothesis, or b. Study questions and objectives			
	The review of related research and literature includes: Comparisons/contrasts of different points of view or different research outcomes and the relationship of the study to previous research			
	The content of the review is drawn from acceptable peer-reviewed journals or sound academic journals or there is justification for using other sources.			
	The review is an integrated, critical essay on the most relevant and current published knowledge on the topic. Historically important sources are included if relevant. The review is organized around major ideas or themes.			
	The theory and/or theoretical framework is appropriate; The relationship between the framework and problem is well established by literature support; Concepts from the framework guide the development of the study.			

Comments

		Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Methods</b>	The Introduction describes how the research design derives logically from the research problem, hypotheses and/or questions and theoretical framework (if appropriate).			
	The process by which the data were generated, gathered, recorded and managed is clearly described			
	How the data were analyzed is articulated			

Comments

Section		Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Results</b>	Builds logically from the problem and the research design, and presented in a manner that addresses the research questions.			

	Patterns, relationships, and themes described as findings are supported by the data. All salient data are accounted for in the findings.			
	The tables and figures are clear, effective and informative.			

Comments

		Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Discussion</b>	Provides a brief summary of the research findings that can be drawn from the study			
	Contains implications of the study, relates the findings to the review of literature and articulates the needs for future research			

Comments

		Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Not Applicable
<b>Writing</b>	Follows a standard form and has a professional scholarly appearance			
	Is written with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling, using active voice			
	Citations are presented consistently and professionally throughout the text and in the reference list.			
	Writing is clear, precise, concise and accurate, avoiding jargon			
	Logically organized			

Adapted from Texas Tech Health Sciences Center rubric Moore \dissertation rubric 10-1-08 and the Duke Thesis Assessment Protocol, Duke University 2007

#### Description of the Rating Scale

##### Acceptable

- Is original and important
- Is well written and organized
- Has a point of view and exhibits mature, independent thinking
- Asks new questions or addresses an important question or problem
- Displays a deep understanding of the literature
- Shows a deep understanding of theory
- Is the next step in a research program
- Has a research design that is connected to the questions/hypotheses
- Analysis is comprehensive, complete, and convincing
- Results are important
- Conclusion ties the whole thing together
- Is publishable

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##### Not Acceptable

- Is not very original or important

- Is poorly written
- Has spelling and grammatical errors
- Has a sloppy presentation
- Contains errors or mistakes
- Has a weak structure and organization
- Plagiarizes or deliberately misreads or misuses sources
- Displays a narrow understanding of the field
- Knows the literature but is not critical of it or does not discuss what is important
- Does not understand or misses relevant literature
- Demonstrates understanding of theory at a simple level, and theory is minimally applied to the problem
- Relies on inappropriate or incorrect methods
- Has data that are flawed, wrong, false, fudged, or misinterpreted
- Analysis—does not explore all possibilities and misses connections
- Includes results that are obvious, already known, unexplained, or misinterpreted
- Has unsupported or exaggerated interpretation

Adapted from “How to Grade a Dissertation” Barbara E. Lovitts Academe Nov-Dec 2005

## 8. Acceptance

The complete draft of the dissertation must be uploaded to Proquest with a completed Right to Defend form. Once the student receives an email giving the Right to Defend, the student may arrange for their dissertation defense.

## 9. Defense

The oral defense of the dissertation provides the candidate and committee members an opportunity to discuss the dissertation research, clarify issues, and validate the research.

The defense of the dissertation is open to the academic community of the University.

- The chair of the dissertation committee will notify the Graduate School of the date, time, location, and tentative title of the dissertation two weeks prior to the defense.
- The Graduate School will notify the University community of the public presentation.
- The dissertation chair is responsible for conducting the defense in a constructive manner that will assist the student to integrate critique of the dissertation.

Subject to reasonable expectations of the chair of the candidate's committee, visitors may participate in questioning and discussion relevant to the topic of the dissertation. Only members of the candidate's committee will vote and make a final recommendation on the acceptance of the dissertation. The chair will also organize formal questions submitted from committee members to allow for a cohesive review of the dissertation.

The candidate should consult the chair in advance about what to expect in the course of the oral defense. The candidate is required to make an opening presentation that covers the essential elements of the dissertation. Candidates are encouraged to prepare the presentation in collaboration with their dissertation chair and practice beforehand. Candidates are urged to talk to the committee chair and to other faculty in their field about how questions from the audience can be addressed. Candidates may also choose to prepare by attending a few oral defenses in their own or related fields. The dissertation chair will lead any discussion tactfully while keeping the oral defense on track. While no time limit is set for an oral defense, the average defense takes about two hours.

Immediately following the defense, the committee will meet to evaluate the candidate's performance. A Graduate School designee and any other members of the MCN Graduate faculty may be in attendance during the committee's deliberations. Evaluation results will be either Pass or Fail. Upon completion of deliberation, the committee will meet with the student immediately to provide feedback. Any candidate who fails to pass on the second attempt or who declines to repeat the defense is ineligible to graduate and will be academically dismissed from the program.

If the result of the evaluation is Pass, the student will then request signatures from committee members to complete the Outcome of Dissertation Defense form located at: <http://grad.illinoisstate.edu/academics/forms/> . A copy of this form should be sent to MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services.

Following a successful defense, the student must file the final copy in Proquest as directed on the Graduate School website: <http://grad.illinoisstate.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation/final.shtml> along with the Outcome of Defense form and the Final Deposit Checklist. To be eligible for degree completion, a candidate must deposit the dissertation by the deadlines published on the Graduate School website. Dissertations filed after posted deadlines will be credited toward degree completion the following semester.

### **III. Policies and Procedures**

#### **A. Policy on Progression**

This policy specifies the requirements for progression in the PhD program. Students are encouraged to work closely with their academic and dissertation advisors to ensure steady progress through these requirements.

##### **1. Residency Requirement and Documentation**

The ISU residency requirement (see ISU Graduate catalog) will be followed and may be fulfilled in the following ways:

- Students must complete at least two full-time terms.
- The options for completing this residency include: two consecutive semesters with at least nine hours of course work or one semester with at least nine hours of course work and a consecutive summer term over a time period of at least eight weeks with six hours of course work, or two consecutive summer terms with six hours of coursework each semester.
- Students must file Declaration of Residency form for approval prior to entering into residency. This form should be submitted to the Office of Student and Faculty Services and who will then forward to the Graduate School.

##### **2. Continuous Registration**

The ISU policy on continuous registration will be followed. Once a student is Admitted to Candidacy they are required to maintain continuous registration until the deposit of final dissertation in the Graduate School. Students must request a leave of absence from the College if circumstances prohibit continuing registration. If students anticipate that continuous registration is not possible, students are advised to talk with the Graduate Program advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator to ensure adherence to University policies.

##### **3. Time Limitations**

Students are required to complete the degree by the end of eight calendar years, starting from the initial registration date as a PhD student.

##### ***a. Extending Time to Complete Doctoral Degree Program***

To apply for extension of time to complete the program, the student must submit the ISU Request to Extend Time to Complete Graduate Masters/Doctoral Degree Program Form: <http://grad.illinoisstate.edu/academics/forms/> .

#### **B. Student Benchmarks**

Benchmarks are standards by which a student's performance and progress in the PhD program are judged. The benchmarks apply to full-time and part-time students. Full-time study equals 9 academic credit hours per semester. Students are to work closely with their faculty advisor to ensure they are meeting the benchmarks in a timely manner. Advisors can use discretion when determining student benchmarks and progression. The benchmarks are intended to familiarize PhD students in the areas of expertise required of nursing scholars. Therefore, the benchmarks will be developed in the following three



areas: Education, Research, and Service. Student progression on benchmarks will be reviewed during the students' annual review.

## 1. PhD Student Benchmarks

### **Year 1** (or after 18 semester hours)

#### Academic Plan

1. Submit Plan of Study to Mennonite College of Nursing Office of Student and Faculty Services
2. Begin to identify courses for cognate
3. Begin to identify committee members for comprehensive exam and dissertation
4. Begin to assemble annotated bibliography
5. Maintain good academic standing

#### Research

1. Regularly attend research colloquia
2. Begin to define dissertation research area
3. Participate in a guided research team
4. Attend one scientific conference (MNRS)
5. Write and plan for submission of pre-doctoral application

#### Service

1. Participate in service activities\*

### **Year 2** (or after 36 semester hours)

#### Academic Plan

1. Begin to assemble annotated bibliography
2. Gain experience as a teaching assistant, if necessary
3. Prepare for comprehensive exam
4. Maintain good academic standing

#### Research

1. Regularly attend research colloquia
2. Participate in a guided research team
3. Attend and present at one professional conference
4. Submit (or resubmit, as appropriate) pre-doctoral application
5. Co-author manuscript with advisor or other faculty member
6. Prepare and submit one journal article as first author

#### Service

1. Participate in service activities\*

### **Year 3** (or after 54 semester hours)

#### Academic Plan

1. Successfully complete coursework
2. Successfully complete comprehensive exam
3. Complete research residency
4. Maintain good academic standing

#### Research

1. Regularly attend research colloquia
2. Participate in a guided research team
3. Attend and present at one professional conference
4. Present at a research conference
5. Submit co-authored manuscript with advisor or other faculty member for publication
6. Prepare and submit one journal article as first author

#### Service

1. Participate in service activities\*

**Year 4** (or after being admitted to candidacy)

Academic Plan

1. Schedule dissertation defense
2. Successfully defend dissertation
3. Complete graduation forms

Research

1. Conduct dissertation research
2. Present at a research conference
3. Prepare and submit one journal article as first author
4. Submit co-authored manuscript with advisor or other faculty member for publication
5. Prepare post-doctoral application

Service

1. Participate in service activities\*

\* Examples of service activities include membership on an academic committee, professional society, or participation in a MCN committee.

## C. Advising

Students in the PhD program are advised by the MCN Graduate Programs Academic Advisor as well as an assigned Faculty Advisor.

Upon admission to the program, students are directed to contact their Graduate Program Academic Advisor for an initial advising appointment. In this appointment the student and advisor will develop the plan of study, review instructions on how to register for courses, discuss the master's level statistics requirement, declaration of residency requirements and form submission requirements. After the initial advising meeting, students will receive an email every semester with registration information to their ISU email account. Students will only be eligible to register for the upcoming semester if they are in compliance with all health and safety requirements. The Health and Safety Compliance Officer provides updates to the Academic Advisor each semester as registration opens to inform of those students who are eligible to register. If the student is not eligible to register due to incomplete health records, the student must submit any deficient items to update health records in order to become eligible to register. If a student finds it necessary to alter the agreed upon plan of study, the student must contact the Graduate Programs Academic Advisor to develop a revised plan of study. Change to a plan of study may result in delayed graduation.

Students are also assigned a Faculty Advisor based on mutual research interests. This match is first determined by the faculty admissions review committee. A strong research match between student and faculty is an important factor in the admissions review committee decision to admit a student. Once the match has been determined, the Graduate Program Coordinator assists the initial link between student and faculty advisor.

The student and faculty advisor will meet at least 2 times per year. The meetings should focus on the student's professional development. The meetings will generally be as follows:

- Fall meeting (September) to establish goals for the academic year.
- Spring meeting (April) to review progress toward the achievement of annual goals and begin planning for the next academic year.

### 1. Annual Review

All students will undergo an annual review of their progress with their dissertation advisors in April. The Graduate Program Coordinator will also attend annual reviews. The annual review is designed for the student to update their advisors on their course and dissertation progress. The review also allows for problem-solving, should that be necessary. Reviews are discussions designed to ensure the success of students in the program.

### ***a. Requirements***

Students will submit a portfolio to the faculty advisors that, at a minimum, will include:

- An updated curriculum vitae
- An updated copy of the plan of study completed in full
- Manuscripts in development, submitted for publication, accepted for publication and published
- Grants applied for and/or awarded
- Update on progress of annotated bibliography. Students will use computer software to electronically keep track of their articles. Each article citation will be accompanied by a summary.
- A one-page narrative summary of progress toward meeting the program requirements and benchmarks for the coming 12 months. The summary should indicate which benchmarks were exceeded, met and unmet. Students should also provide a brief explanation if benchmarks were not met. To meet this requirement, students must complete the PhD Student Annual Benchmarks and Review of Progress form.

### ***b. Scheduling***

Portfolios are due electronically to advisors on April 1. The faculty advisor, Graduate Program Coordinator and the student will meet no later than April 30 of each academic year.

### ***c. Evaluation***

The Director of the Graduate Program, the faculty advisor, and the student will meet to discuss the student's progress and make recommendations. Following the evaluation, the faculty advisor will prepare the Annual Evaluation Report portion of the review form. A copy of this report is given to the student and a copy becomes a part of the student's academic record.

If the student disagrees with any aspect of the evaluation, the student may request, in writing, that the evaluation be reviewed by the Graduate Program Coordinator. The Graduate Program Coordinator will report the outcome to the student. Students are to follow MCN's Student Grievance Policy if a resolution cannot be achieved.

Evaluation results will be one of the following:

- *Satisfactory progress*: no additional work is required.
- *Satisfactory progress, however, a revised plan of study is required*: If this occurs, the student, in collaboration with the advisor, will be required to formulate a new plan of study and re-submit to Mennonite College of Nursing Office of Student and Faculty Services. A copy of the revised plan of study will be sent to the Graduate Program Coordinator.
- *Unsatisfactory progress, a revised of plan of study and other requirements*: If this occurs, the student, in collaboration with the advisor, will be required to formulate a plan for remediation. Progress will be re-evaluated within 6 months and an Annual Evaluation Report form will be prepared. A copy of the Annual Evaluation Report will be sent to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

### ***d. Records***

The PhD Student Annual Benchmarks/Review of Progress and Annual Evaluation Report form will be filed at OSFS in the student's academic file.

## **D. Health and Safety Compliance Requirements**

All students entering the Nursing Program are expected to be in compliance with all Health Requirements of the broader university and Mennonite College of Nursing. The university signs contracts with nursing clinical agencies which state that our students' background checks and drug screens are clear. We must disclose this information with every clinical agency you enter as a part of your clinical/practicum/residency experiences. It is the facility's right to deny access if they choose.

These health and safety requirements include, but are not limited to the following: immunizations, blood titers, TB skin test, influenza vaccination, drug test, and criminal background checks. Given that some clinical sites will require students to provide verification that they have completed certain immunization requirements, students are responsible for providing a copy of the health record directly to the clinical agency requesting the information. Therefore, it is vital that students keep a copy of ALL immunization records in a secure file for easy access at all time when enrolled in nursing courses.

In addition, some experiences may require additional criminal background checks and finger printing in order to participate at their clinical site. Faculty will advise when this is necessary. Note that these requirements are subject to change at any time period during the academic year as dictated by clinical placements. Compliance with all health requirements is expected. Those students not in compliance with these requirements by specified timeframes may NOT register for courses, participate in courses and/or clinical until deficiencies are completed.

## **E. Blood Borne Pathogens Requirement**

Students and faculty of Mennonite College of Nursing follow the Illinois State University Blood Borne Pathogens/Infectious Waste Exposure Control Plan prepared by the Environmental Health and Safety Office. This plan can be found at: <http://ehs.illinoisstate.edu/services/occupational/pathogen>

Students and faculty also follow standard precautions and recommendations set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and can be accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov>

### Procedure for reporting student exposure to blood/body fluids

Upon significant exposure to blood/bodily fluids during clinical experience or in the clinical nursing lab the following actions are implemented:

1. The student immediately reports the exposure to the instructor or lab staff
2. The clinical agency's protocol for exposure/injury is followed immediately. Should the incident occur in the lab, the lab personnel will dispose of the contaminated needle and communicate the event to the Simulation Lab Coordinator or Director.
3. Follow-up serologies and medical evaluation can be done at ISU Student Health Services according to "The Bloodborne Pathogen/Infectious Exposure Control Plan" at: [www.policy.illinoisstate.edu/health-safety/5-3-7.shtml](http://www.policy.illinoisstate.edu/health-safety/5-3-7.shtml)
4. The student and faculty complete an Incident Report available on the ISU Environment Health and Safety website at <http://www.ehs.ilstu.edu/downloads/Non-employee.pdf>. After downloading and completing the form, the original should be sent to the Environmental Health and Safety address on the form. A copy of the completed form should be delivered to the Mennonite College of Nursing Associate Dean's office by the student.
5. The student is solely responsible for all healthcare expenses (i.e. treatment, evaluation, etc.) that may be incurred as a result of injury exposure to blood/bodily fluids.

## **F. Changing Faculty Advisors**

If a change in faculty advisor is necessary, the student and faculty advisor should first discuss this matter. A change in faculty advisor may be warranted if the student distinctly changes the focus of his/her dissertation through the course of doctoral study. Students must complete a Change of Advisor form and secure signatures from both current and new advisors and the Graduate Program Coordinator before submitting the forms to the Office of Student and Faculty Services.

## **G. Student Advisement Responsibilities**

The student bears substantial responsibility to assure that advisement occurs in a timely and appropriate manner. The student is responsible for:

1. Communicating regularly with his/her advisors regarding progress, plans, goals and any problems that might occur
2. Initiating contact with faculty advisor
3. Being aware of College of Nursing policies and requirements
4. Following the plan of study and goals as agreed upon with the graduate programs advisor and faculty advisor
5. Participating in annual review
6. Reporting any problems that might delay the completion of coursework, or dissertation research progress

7. Requesting and completing all appropriate documents consistent with the completion of the doctoral degree
8. Participating in the selection of committee members for the comprehensive exam and dissertation

## H. ISU Code of Conduct Values

To be a student at Illinois State University, we expect you to recognize the strength of personal differences, while respecting institutional values. You are encouraged to think and act for yourself, as that is the purpose of higher education. However, we expect you to understand that the University has non-negotiable values in which it believes strongly. These values include:

- Character
- Conscience
- Civility
- Citizenship
- An Appreciation of Diversity
- Individual and Social Responsibility

These values are the hallmark of the University, and will be protected diligently. Each person has the right and ability to make decisions about his or her own conduct. Just as importantly, each person has the responsibility to accept the consequences of those decisions. When individual behavior conflicts with the values of the University, the individual must choose whether to adapt his or her behavior to meet the needs of the community or to leave the University. This decision, among others, assists each person to determine who he or she is with respect to the rest of society.

You may access the Code of Student Conduct at:

<http://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conflict/conduct/code/>

## I. Academic Integrity

Illinois State University values academic integrity very highly. Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. Illinois State University considers it to be a serious issue if a student has not submitted solely his/her own work, not given credit thoroughly to sources, or completed a test or assignment using unauthorized materials/assistance. A student's placement of his/her name on any academic exercise shall be considered as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own thought and study.

Illinois State University recognizes that it must create an environment where each student will be free to pursue her or his academic interests without interference from others. This includes upholding the integrity of the academic process, as well as, providing a community free of disruptions. The following restrictions are designed to foster a healthy and peaceful learning community. Their violation will result in disciplinary action.

For more information: <http://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conflict/conduct/code/academic.php>

## J. Research Integrity Policy

Students are expected to maintain ethical integrity in all scholarly endeavors. Misconduct or fraud in scholarly endeavors may be grounds for disciplinary action. Research or scientific misconduct includes but is not limited to the following: **Fabrication of Research Data; Plagiarism; or Falsification in Reporting.**

Further information on the expectations regarding integrity in research is located at

<http://www.policy.ilstu.edu/conduct/1-1-8.shtml> and <http://research.illinoisstate.edu/ethics/>

## K. Confidentiality

Confidentiality of patient information is expected. Only relevant information obtained from or about a patient may be disclosed to the health care personnel, faculty, and peers involved in the individual's care. Breach of confidentiality can lead to expulsion from the College of Nursing. Confidentiality, HIPPA and Social Media expectations will be reinforced in orientation and a signature of understanding will be completed.

To understand the limits of appropriate use of social media, it is important to have an understanding of confidentiality and privacy in the health care context. Confidentiality and privacy are related, but distinct concepts. Any patient information learned by the nurse during the course of treatment must be safeguarded by that nurse. Such information may only be disclosed to other members of the health care team for health care purposes. Confidential information should be shared only with the patient's informed consent, when legally required or where failure to disclose the information could result in significant harm. Beyond these very limited exceptions the nurse's obligation to safeguard such confidential information is universal.

Federal law reinforces and further defines privacy through the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). HIPAA regulations are intended to protect patient privacy by defining individually identifiable information and establishing how this information may be used, by whom and under what circumstances. The definition of individually identifiable information includes any information that relates to the past, present or future physical or mental health of an individual, or provides enough information that leads someone to believe the information could be used to identify an individual. Social and electronic media possess tremendous potential for strengthening personal relationships and providing valuable information to health care consumers. Nurses need to be aware of the potential ramifications of disclosing patient-related information via social media. Nurses should be mindful of employer policies, relevant state and federal laws, and professional standards regarding patient privacy and confidentiality and its application to social and electronic media. By being careful and conscientious, nurses may enjoy the personal and professional benefits of social and electronic media without violating patient privacy and confidentiality.

## **L. Provisional Admission**

When a student is provisionally admitted to the PhD program because at the time of application and admission, official licensure/certification documentation had not been received, the student has a 6 month grace period from the time of enrollment to submit the official documentation to MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services.

## **M. RN Licensure**

Applicants to and current students of the Mennonite College of Nursing graduate program are required to hold an unencumbered licensure in every state in which the student is licensed and are required to provide evidence of current RN licensure in Illinois. It is the applicant's/student's responsibility to ensure that the College has current licensure information on file. Mennonite College of Nursing reserves the right to verify licensure status.

Should a change in licensure, such as license suspension or revocation, occur, it is the responsibility of the student to provide this information to the Graduate Program Coordinator. Students without current licensure are prohibited from participating in any coursework. Failure to report licensure changes will result in disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the academic program.

## **N. Change of Address**

All students need to notify the Office of Student and Faculty Services regarding any changes in address or telephone numbers to ensure students receive proper mailings. Students must also update their information through the MyIllinoisState Portal, Profile Tab, under Contact/Address Information.

## **O. Class Attendance**

Students are expected to fully participate in program courses and course requirements. Frequent or prolonged lack of participation in courses may necessitate that the student withdraw from the course(s). All matters pertaining to student health and illness are to be referred to the course instructor and the faculty advisor, if appropriate. A student wishing to drop a course must discuss the matter with the instructor and the academic advisor.

## **P. Academic Progress**

1. Progress Toward the Degree: Students are expected to adhere to their plan of study and to communicate with faculty, sequence/program leader and/or graduate program coordinator/advisor when deviations from the plan of study are necessary. The college is committed to keeping students

on time to degree, but modifications to the plan of study are likely to result in delayed degree completion.

2. **B Policy:** For students enrolled in graduate coursework at Mennonite College of Nursing, a grade of a “B” is considered “minimum passing” work. Any student receiving a “C” or below in a course must repeat the course. Students are allowed to retake a maximum of 3 hours of course work in each sequence in which they are enrolled. Students receiving a “C” or below in more than 3 hours will be dismissed from the program consistent with the graduate school policy. GPAs are monitored by the Graduate School. Students with cumulative GPAs of less than 3.0 are notified by the Graduate School.
3. **Course Progress Reports:** Course faculty are readily available to discuss student progress in courses. Students who, in the judgement of faculty, are at risk for academic jeopardy will receive a Course Progress Report from the course faculty. Indication of a performance deficiency may include but are not limited to:
  - a. Faculty determine that the student is in academic jeopardy
  - b. Receiving a failing score on any assignment
  - c. Demonstrating unsatisfactory clinical performance and/or a pattern of behavior not consistent with clinical expectations
  - d. Suspension from clinical for dangerous or unsafe behavior

The purposes of these reports are to

- a. Ensure effective communication between students and faculty
- b. Assist students to understand the nature of their academic situation
- c. Identify strategies for improving student performance

Students who receive a progress report are expected to meet with their instructor within one week of receiving the report. After meeting with the student, the instructor will provide a copy for the student and retain a copy for their own file. A copy will also be provided to the sequence/program leader, graduate program coordinator and graduate program academic advisor (for placement in student’s file). See form on the MCN website with other PhD forms:

<http://nursing.illinoisstate.edu/doctoral/advising/>

## **Q. Transfer of Course Work**

Upon recommendation of the College and with the approval of the Graduate School, a student may request transfer of a maximum of 40% graduate credit from another college or university that is accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting association for use in meeting the requirements of the PhD degree. Credits more than 8 years old at the time of first registration into a degree program are not transferable from other institutions. The work must not form part of a degree program elsewhere. Under special circumstances, the Graduate School may allow a student to present a larger number of credits if recommended by the College. A student who plans to take work elsewhere should obtain prior approval from the College indicating that the course or courses are appropriate to the student's curriculum at Illinois State University. To be considered for transfer of credit, a course must be taught at the graduate level and the student must have received at least a grade of “B” in the course. In addition, a College evaluation of all courses presented is necessary prior to consideration by the Graduate School. If the College approves the transfer of credits, the student requesting credit is required to submit the official transcript for the course work to the College. Following receipt of the official transcript, the College will request by email to Registrar staff to have electronic record updated with transfer work and MCN course equivalents. These credits will be noted on the student's degree audit at time of graduation.

## **R. Mennonite College of Nursing Student Grievance Policy**

Mennonite College of Nursing endorses the Student Grievance Process of Illinois State University as outlined in the following website:

As outlined in this policy, “A grievance is defined as a complaint arising out of any alleged unauthorized or unjustified act or decision by a member of the University community which in any way adversely affects the status, rights, or privileges of any student. Typically, grievances are a response to an action that has been taken against a student by a faculty or staff member that is without justification or basic fairness. Most often, grievances arise based on a student's belief that a grade awarded in a class was unfair and not in accordance with the work performed. In other cases, students might be deprived of their status, rights, or privileges based on an arbitrary and/or capricious action.”

If a student is not sure whether or not the action in question can be challenged through the grievance process, please contact the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution at (309) 438-8621.

## Informal Process

1. If a student has a grievance or complaint, the student should attempt an informal resolution with the faculty or staff member in question.
2. If this proves unsuccessful, the student should seek informal resolution with the course coordinator (for clinical courses).

## Formal Process

If an informal resolution is not successful, the student may proceed to initiating a formal complaint/grievance.

1. To initiate the formal process, the student must file a written formal complaint within 30 working days of the alleged grievance. The written complaint must:
  - a. Be word processed
  - b. Be signed and dated
  - c. Include student current address and phone number
  - d. Be concise and specific, with names and dates wherever relevant and possible
  - e. Clearly state the act or decision being challenged
  - f. Clearly state why the act or decision is unauthorized or unjust
  - g. Briefly describe your attempts to reach an agreement through informal discussions with the instructor and/or course coordinators.
2. Failure to include all required information will result in a delay of the grievance process. Written complaints will not be reviewed until all information is provided.
3. The Graduate Program Coordinator will review the formal complaint and meet with the student and/or faculty/staff member within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint.
4. The Graduate Program Coordinator will attempt to facilitate resolution of the grievance at the College level. Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (SCCR) is available to provide a 3rd party mediator for internal grievance meetings. When this service is requested, the student should contact SCCR a minimum of 3 days prior to the meeting scheduled with the Graduate Program Coordinator to arrange for a mediator to be present.
5. If a resolution is not achieved within the College, a grievance request may be filed by the student with the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Office or the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action as appropriate. SCCR is responsible for coordinating the formal student grievance process at the university level. This process exists to provide students an opportunity to request that the University review actions or decisions of University faculty and staff members. The SCCR is responsible for reviewing student complaints and investigating cases it deems necessary of investigation.



## **S. Readmission Policy**

Graduate students who wish to return to Mennonite College of Nursing after a lapse in registration of one calendar year or more must apply for readmission at the Office of Admissions, <http://welcome2isu.IllinoisState.edu/uPortal>

Additional admission materials may be required by the College of Nursing after review of the student's previous admission materials. Those students with less than a one calendar year lapse may register for non-clinical classes without completing a readmission application. Registration for clinical courses is considered on an individual basis and must be approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Students who are not in good standing and who have not maintained continuous enrollment (excluding summer terms), who wish to return to the university are required to apply for readmission as students on academic probation. Students who have been dismissed from a graduate program at Mennonite College of Nursing are not eligible for readmission to that program. Readmission to a different program will require that the applicant meet the Academic Progress policy and will require a complete application to the newly selected program, including a new essay outlining educational and professional career goals relevant to the newly selected program.

## **T. Pregnancy**

The United States Office for Civil Rights has provided additional guidance regarding pregnant students. Pregnancy is defined as pregnancy, childbirth, or medical/common conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth. As a result of this newly enacted guidance, students requesting an accommodation due to pregnancy may contact The Office of Disability Concerns at 309/438-5853.

## **IV. Technology Requirements**

Students can find the most current computer requirements on the MCN web page under the "Student Life" tab, under the heading of "Technology." <http://nursing.illinoisstate.edu/studentlife/>

### **A. Computer Requirements**

To successfully complete the PhD program in the College of Nursing, students are expected to have frequent and convenient access to computer and Internet resources. Many doctoral courses use online course management programs.

Doctoral students may be required to either purchase or have access to specialized software, such as SPSS for research methods classes and Endnote for compiling annotative bibliographies.

Upon entry to the PhD program, it is expected that students will have prerequisite computer skills in word processing, email, attachments, PowerPoint, Excel, uploading and downloading documents, and internet use. If you are lacking any of these skills, it is important that you obtain these skills through courses or free online tutorials that are available on the web. The College of Nursing also requires students have an ISU email account (name@ilstu.edu) in your name as long as you are a student in the program.

Illinois State University students can take advantage of special hardware and software pricing as well as installation support at the TechZone on campus. See the TechZone website at <http://techzone.illinoisstate.edu/>.

### **B. Resource Requirements for Distance Education**

Distance Education is incorporated in the PhD program to create the opportunity for students to participate in classes by using the technology from their home or office. MCN uses technology to allow students and instructors the ability hear each other, share data, presentations, and anything else that is brought to class.

Weeks 3, 9, and 12 in the fall and spring terms are designated distance education weeks for the students in the PhD program.

Students will need the following resources at the site where they plan to access the application:

- A reliable broadband internet connection
  - The technology does not function with dial-up or wireless connections
- Java plug-in (available from java.com)
- Recommendations
  - Avoid wireless access points for internet access as the reliability of the connection will be decreased
  - Adjust firewall settings to minimal protective settings
  - Recognize that workplaces often restrict internet traffic which may affect your ability to access ReggieNet. Consider working closely with technical personnel at your workplace to determine the feasibility of using this system there.

## V. Financial Assistance

### A. Process for Seeking Assistance

Upon admission to the MCN doctoral program, students will be directed to financial assistance opportunities.

Students should talk with their faculty advisor to develop a plan for seeking financial assistance. MCN will also forward information about new opportunities directly to students by email.

The student should inform the Office of Student and Faculty Services and faculty advisor of any financial awards received. The student must provide a copy of the award notice to the Office of Student and Faculty Services. This copy will be placed in the student's file.

The MCN website link "Financing Your Education" provides detailed information about funding opportunities.

### B. Examples of Funding Opportunities for PhD Students

#### **Research and Teaching Assistantships:**

Student provides teaching or research assistance to the College in return for tuition waiver and stipend. Availability of assistantships varies based on faculty needs. Students should discuss assistantships with a faculty advisor early, in order to identify opportunities and ensure adequate time to apply.

- ISU guidelines [http://www.hr.ilstu.edu/downloads/GA\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.hr.ilstu.edu/downloads/GA_Handbook.pdf)
- Assistantships are competitive appointments made by the college
- Assistantships include tuition waiver and monthly stipend
- A tuition waiver does NOT include waiving fees
- Assistantships may be full-time (20 hours/week) or part-time (10 hours/week) appointments
- Appointments are for a fixed period of time, up to one year and may be renewed based on availability of both funding and scheduling

In addition to the assistantships described above, ISU has a process to arrange a graduate practicum or assistantship by contracting with external agencies or sponsors. This arrangement allows the student to complete a mutually beneficial research or teaching project for an external agency as part of a graduate assistantship. In this arrangement, the student receives a stipend from the agency and tuition waiver from ISU. This arrangement must be developed with input from the faculty advisor and processed through the ISU Research and Sponsored program office. More information is available in the "Online Graduate Assistant Applicant Guide" at [http://hr.illinoisstate.edu/student/graduate\\_assistants/](http://hr.illinoisstate.edu/student/graduate_assistants/) and at <http://research.illinoisstate.edu/>.

#### **Scholarships:**

Money awarded that does not need to be paid back. Some scholarships have special stipulations; specific opportunities, along with search assistance, are included below.

#### **Private Sources:**

Mennonite College of Nursing offers many private sources of financial assistance. Students who wish to be considered for MCN scholarships must complete the application form found at:

<http://nursing.illinoisstate.edu/studentlife/scholarships.php> . Please note that all students are required to file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Renewal Application if financial need is a criterion.

### **Illinois State University Scholarships:**

ISU offers scholarship opportunities to graduate students. Information about the scholarships and application requirements can be found at <http://financialaid.illinoisstate.edu/>.

### **Fellowships:**

Awards given to assist students with graduate level academic requirements or with completion of special projects or research such as dissertations.

- Fellowships can be funded by the federal government or state government/agencies, foundations, professional organizations and other organizations.
- Each student must work closely with their faculty advisor to identify and apply for a fellowship(s).
- The student must identify a faculty sponsor to apply for fellowships.
- Examples of various types of fellowships will be distributed to faculty advisors and students.

### **Dissertation Research Grants (DRG's):**

Support dissertation-related research of the highest quality. This grant program is intended to provide doctoral students with operating funds to develop the dissertation proposal, conduct research, collect data, analyze findings and write the completed project. Eligible students are expected to work closely with their faculty advisor to develop the grant application. Information can be found under the PhD program website under Advising Tab and Forms.

## **VI. Evaluations**

### **A. Faculty/Course Evaluations**

Toward the end of each semester, students will be asked to complete online faculty and course evaluation forms. If two or more instructors are teaching a class, an evaluation form will be completed for each. These evaluations are held until after semester grades are submitted to appropriate University personnel. Once the semester grades have been submitted, faculty are given the evaluation data for review. Constructive feedback is used to improving learning in classroom and clinical experience.

### **B. Submitting Request for Letter of Recommendation**

There is a formal process for requesting a letter of recommendation from a faculty or staff member. In order to ensure that faculty/staff are following FERPA guidelines, it is necessary for you to sign a FERPA waiver when requesting any verbal or written recommendation (even after you graduate). See the link for the FERPA waiver on the attached guidelines form.

The attached guidelines are suggested steps for students to take so that faculty/staff members have informed information with which to provide your letter of reference. Please use this process when seeking out faculty/staff for a recommendation.



Student Recommendation Request Form

Instructions for Students:

- Email faculty/staff member a request to complete a **Letter of Recommendation** on your behalf and specify why the student feels this individual is the best person to write this recommendation. If the faculty/staff member agrees to send a letter on your behalf, please proceed to the next steps.
- Complete the FERPA Waiver - Letter of Recommendation form found on the Registrar's web page at <http://www.registrar.ilstu.edu/ferpa/> and send to faculty/staff member.
- Send the faculty/staff member the following information:

*Student Name:*

*Nursing Program (i.e. MSN – FNP, NSA, PhD, DNP)*

*Year in School/Expected Graduation Date:*

*Today's Date (please allow 1 week minimum):*

*Date Requested by:*

*How many copies of the letter are being requested?*

*Position applying for?*

*Name and address of company (if not specified, the letter will be addressed "To Whom It May Concern"):*

*Is there any specific information you would like for the letter writer to know about you or this position (i.e. certain skills, proficiencies)?*

*Are there clinical instructors that the letter writer can contact about your clinical experience?*

*Does the position have a link or flyer? If so, please include it.*

*Do you have a resume? If so, please send to letter writer.*

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Instructions for Faculty/Staff:

- Forward the signed FERPA form to Nancy Wagler at [njwagle@ilstu.edu](mailto:njwagle@ilstu.edu) (or fax it to 309-438-7711) to the MCN Office of Student and Faculty Services. OSFS will put a copy in the student's file and send the original FERPA form to the Registrar's Office.
- Upon receipt of the FERPA waiver complete the student's letter. Recommendations cannot be provided without a FERPA waiver completed.

## VII. College Support and Organizations

### A. MCN Orientation

The Mennonite College of Nursing Orientation is scheduled prior to the start of the PhD program. Orientation includes a program overview, information about advising, academic policies and procedures, health and safety compliance requirements, ISU's ReggieNet training, library orientation, and the opportunity to meet your program peers. Students are instructed to go to the Redbird Card Office to obtain your ISU ID card. This should be obtained while you are on campus for orientation. Attendance at this orientation is required.

### B. Library Orientation

Mennonite College of Nursing is served by Milner Library which is located on the Illinois State University Campus. The library has an excellent collection of health sciences resources including books, media, and journals. Most journals are available electronically from its homepage at [www.library.illinoisstate.edu](http://www.library.illinoisstate.edu). MCN is served by a library liaison who is available for instruction sessions, reference question and consultations.

The library provides access to over 300 databases including CINAHL, PubMed, Cochrane, Dissertations and Theses, Health and Psychosocial Instruments, National Guideline Clearinghouse and PsycINFO. Articles and books not available at Milner can be obtained by requesting and interlibrary loan. Requested articles are delivered to the requestor in PDF format using email.

As part of the scheduled Orientation, students are required to attend a library orientation. They will be given an opportunity to meet the nursing librarian and become familiar with the titles and location of selected sources that will support their studies at Mennonite College of Nursing.

## VIII. Graduation Requirements and Commencement

Graduation and Commencement information at Illinois State University can be found on <http://grad.illinoisstate.edu/academics/graduation/>

This website will answer your graduation and commencement ceremony questions. It is important to be aware of all graduation and commencement ceremony dates and deadlines pertinent to the term you plan to graduate. Student must apply for graduation very early in the term they are scheduled to graduate. Students must also indicate when completing the application for graduation their intentions for participation in the commencement ceremony.