



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

**2020-2021**

**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 (MCN) became Illinois State University's sixth academic college on July 1, 1999. The rich heritage of MCN began in 1919. For nearly 100 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 in Edwards Hall.

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

#### **1. Mission**

Mennonite College of Nursing promotes excellence and innovation in education while striving to improve health locally and globally through exceptionally well-prepared nurses.

#### **2. Vision**

To be a community that sets the standard for excellence in nursing practice and education, changing the world one exceptionally well-prepared nurse at a time.

#### **3. Values**

We value life-long, curious learners and relationships with one another and our community. We strive to improve health; demonstrate excellence in our work; provide service to and care for others; and display empathy, openness, advocacy, and purposeful action, in an environment that welcomes diversity while promoting inclusion and the celebration of personal and professional accomplishments.

#### **4. 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 serves 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: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and 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 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 for Academics Seon Yoon Chung	Dean's Suite 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor	Lana Blakemore 438-2176	<a href="mailto:ljblake@ilstu.edu">ljblake@ilstu.edu</a>
Director of Graduate Programs Kim Astroth	219	438-2367	<a href="mailto:kmastro@ilstu.edu">kmastro@ilstu.edu</a>
Director of Undergraduate Programs Melissa Jarvill	220	438-7844	<a href="mailto:mmjarvi@ilstu.edu">mmjarvi@ilstu.edu</a>
Associate Dean for Academic Support Janeen Mollenhauer	112 K	438-2417	<a href="mailto:jrmolle@ilstu.edu">jrmolle@ilstu.edu</a>
Director, Business & Finance Diane Folken	308	438-2247	<a href="mailto:dmfolke@ilstu.edu">dmfolke@ilstu.edu</a>

Director, Events and Publications Amy Irving	321	438-7418	<a href="mailto:amirvin@ilstu.edu">amirvin@ilstu.edu</a>
Director, Marketing and Recruitment Emily McMahon	321	438-0763	<a href="mailto:eemcma1@ilstu.edu">eemcma1@ilstu.edu</a>
Director, Technology Chris Morgan	102	438-2637	<a href="mailto:crmorga@ilstu.edu">crmorga@ilstu.edu</a>
Graduate Programs Academic Advisor/Transcultural Coordinator Melissa Moody	112 J	438-7035	<a href="mailto:mkmoody@ilstu.edu">mkmoody@ilstu.edu</a>
PhD Program Leader Kim Astroth	205	438-2213	<a href="mailto:kmastro@ilstu.edu">kmastro@ilstu.edu</a>
Coordinator, Instructional Experience Carla Leber	221	438-1403	<a href="mailto:cjleber@ilstu.edu">cjleber@ilstu.edu</a>
Administrative Clerk - Post-licensure Admission and Compliance, Barbara Oldenburg	112 H	438-2252	<a href="mailto:baolden@ilstu.edu">baolden@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, other research foci include aging, quality and safety, and nursing education. Generally, PhD students are accepted in the program with the understanding that their research interests are aligned with their faculty advisor.

## **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 (27 semester hours), research practica (6 semester hours), statistics and measurement (9 semester hours), electives (9 semester hours, 400-500 level), and dissertation (15 semester hours). All students must complete a dissertation comprised of original research. Required coursework is usually completed within two to three years, followed by the preliminary exam/dissertation proposal defense 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. Students entering the program post-master's degree may expect to complete the degree within three to four years of full-time study, with required coursework completed in two years, followed by one to two years of dissertation work. Part-time students normally complete all nursing course work by the end of their second year but may need additional time to complete electives; time to degree is usually 4-5 years.

The Ph.D. 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.

## **E. Policy on Progression**

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

### **1. 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 Programs Academic Advisor and the Director of Graduate Programs to ensure

adherence to University policies. Continuous enrollment does not apply to the summer months unless the student is graduating in that term.

## 2. 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. 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: <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/forms/>

## 3. PhD 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 while 6 hours equals part-time status. Students are to work closely with their faculty advisor to ensure they are meeting the benchmarks in a timely manner. Faculty 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 student's annual review.

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

#### Academic Plan

1. Submit Plan of Study to Mennonite College of Nursing Office of Student Services
2. Begin to identify elective courses
3. Begin to identify committee members for dissertation
4. Begin to assemble literature review table using a reference management program such as Endnote Online or Zotero
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 literature review table
2. Gain experience as a teaching assistant, if necessary
3. Prepare for preliminary exam/dissertation proposal defense
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 grant application
5. Co-author manuscript with advisor or another 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 preliminary exam/dissertation proposal defense
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 another faculty member for publication
6. Prepare and submit one journal article as first author
7. Prepare and submit internal grants for the MCN Doctoral Grant Program and the Graduate School Dissertation Completion Grant

#### 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. Attend research colloquia as appropriate
2. Conduct dissertation research
3. Present at a research conference
4. Prepare and submit one journal article as first author
5. Submit co-authored manuscript with advisor or other faculty member for publication
6. 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 an MCN committee.

## F. 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 preliminary exam and dissertation proposal defense, and dissertation is developed between the student and the Graduate Programs Academic Advisor. The plan of study will be shared with the student's assigned faculty advisor and the Director of Graduate Programs. 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 Academic 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 electives must be taken at the 400-500 level and an Independent Study course must be taken at the 500 level.

### 2. PhD Program Course Work

A minimum of 66 credit hours is required for degree completion.

#### REQUIRED CORE COURSES (9 courses, 27 credit hours)

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 502	Introduction to Research Design	3
NUR 503	Theoretical Basis of Nursing Research	3
NUR 504	Scholarly Communication	3
NUR 505	Quantitative Research Design	3
NUR 506	Writing a Review of the Literature	3
NUR 507	Qualitative Research Design	3
NUR 511	Healthcare Policy	3
NUR 513	Ethical, Legal & Professional Issues in Research	3
NUR 515	Dissertation Proposal Design	3

#### REQUIRED RESEARCH PRACTICA COURSES (2 courses, 6 credit hours)

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 523	Applied Research	3
NUR 526	Residency in Research	3

#### STATISTICS AND MEASUREMENT (3 courses, 9 credit hours)

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 540	Univariate Statistics	3

NUR 541	Multivariate Statistics	3
NUR 544	Measurement and Instrumentation in Research	3

**ELECTIVE COURSES (courses selected by student and faculty advisor) (9 credit hours)**

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
	Elective	3
	Elective	3
	Elective	3

**DISSERTATION HOURS (15 credit hours)**

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 599	Dissertation	15

**Colloquium (0 credit hours – students enroll every fall/spring term)**

<i>Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>
NUR 530	Research Colloquium	0

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

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

**4. NUR 526 and NUR 500 Academic Credit to Workload Ratio**

NUR 526, Research in Residency is a 3-hour course that can be taken for variable credit in multiple semesters. Most students will take 1 academic credit hour of NUR 526 per semester for 3 consecutive academic semesters. The Research in Residency course may include activities such as developing a review of the literature, participating in various aspects of a research study, or working on a manuscript for publication.

NUR 500, Independent Study is variable credit as well. This is a course in which the faculty and student develop course objectives specially to meet the needs of the students' program of study. 1 academic credit hour is equal to a minimum of 45 hours of work/contact time. The contact time may vary based on the requirements needed to meet the specific course objectives.

**5. 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 process can be found at the Graduate School website:

<https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation/plan/>

Please reference and take note of their location.

**G. 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 term that begins the PhD program.

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). A syllabus for NUR 409 can be shared with prospective students if interested in taking the placement exam.

Students who score less than 80% on the placement exam must take NUR 409 in the summer before beginning the PhD program. Students who score 80% or above on the placement exam can begin the statistics and measurement course sequence. 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 take the placement exam only 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 an MCN staff member. Due to COVID-19, alternative arrangements will be made for completing the placement exam entering summer 2020. Students who wish to take the exam may schedule a time to do so by calling the, Office of Student Services, 309-438-7400 or contacting Melissa Moody, [mkmood@ilstu.edu](mailto:mkmood@ilstu.edu).

#### **H. Writing Competency**

To ensure that students in the PhD program are aware of the required writing competency skills needed for success in the program, the college will address writing skills during the mandatory orientation that takes place prior to the beginning of the PhD program. If students need additional writing assistance, ISU has the Visor Center which has basic writing resources available at their website:

<https://universitycollege.illinoisstate.edu/help/resources>

Students in need of writing assistance should contact the PhD Program Lead or their faculty advisor for resources.

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

New students will 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 and by email. The PhD program is an on-campus program with options for synchronous online delivery. PhD courses are taught on Fridays in the fall and spring semesters. PhD courses in the summer terms are taught on Tuesday evening or Friday mornings.

#### **J. 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.

#### **K. Research Colloquium**

Students are expected to attend a minimum of five seminars each semester, excluding summer term, until all PhD coursework has been successfully completed and they are ready to begin development of their dissertation proposal. Upon completion of coursework, students should continue to register for colloquium, although required minimum attendance is waived. Topics include presentations of original research, peer review of grants, and other research or program related topics.

#### **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 combination preliminary examination and dissertation proposal defense.

## 1. Candidacy Documentation

Documentation of completion of candidacy requirements:

- Degree Audit – required by the ISU Graduate School to confirm completion/near completion of course work; initiated by the MCN Office of Student Services when the student registers for the combination preliminary examination and dissertation proposal defense.
- Successful completion of the combination preliminary examination and dissertation proposal defense – confirmed by committee signatures on the ISU Proposal Approval Form for Research Leading to a Doctoral Dissertation and submitted to the ISU Graduate School Steps for completion of degree, and a timeline for completing requirements, can be found at <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation/deadlines/>

## M. Dissertation

### 1. Purpose

All students are expected to design, conduct, and disseminate original research with the guidance of an experienced researcher and a committee with topical, method, and/or content expertise. Successful completion of the dissertation is the culmination of course work, residency, and other related learning opportunities. Conferring of the Doctor of Philosophy degree depends on the completion of a high quality dissertation and defense of the dissertation. Students can find the Illinois State University Graduate School guidelines for writing and defending the dissertation on the Graduate School website.

### 2. Dissertation Hours

Students may enroll in dissertation hours in the semester in which they will be preparing for the preliminary examination and dissertation defense. Students must complete a minimum 15 hours of NUR 599 Dissertation hours.

### 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. The PhD faculty and Associate Dean for Research determine the appropriate dissertation advisor/chair based on the student's research interest. 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 is comprised of at least four members. The student will work with the dissertation advisor/chair to select a minimum of three members of graduate faculty in MCN to serve on the committee. The chair must be a full member of the MCN graduate faculty; a majority of the committee must be full or associate members of the MCN graduate faculty. All committee members must have the terminal degree or equivalent and sufficient expertise to warrant their inclusion on the committee. Students may invite qualified 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 another aspect of the student's dissertation topic. At least one of the committee members must have expertise in the dissertation design and methods. Proposed committee members who are not members of the ISU graduate faculty must submit a current CV and be approved by the Graduate School.

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 Director of Graduate Programs. If a student wishes to

change their committee, they must complete the Request to Change Dissertation Committee form and submit to their advisor, the Director of Graduate Programs, and the Office of Student Services.

#### 4. Format and Elements of the Dissertation Proposal

- Three-paper option or traditional dissertation – The student and their committee will determine the form of the final dissertation including the specific nature of the three manuscripts (for example, literature review, methods, and results manuscripts), authorship of those manuscripts and target journals.
- The structure of the written dissertation proposal must be approved by the committee (for example, grant proposals, manuscript length papers, etc..)
- Dissertation proposals typically contain a synthesis of the research literature, theoretical framework, design, and methods.
- Development of the dissertation proposal and preparation for the combined preliminary examination and proposal defense is carried out by the student in consultation with the committee chair and members. The committee will outline expectations for reviewing drafts of the proposal including criteria for review, deadline, and roles (see the Dissertation Proposal Rubric located on the Advising tab under Forms).
- The committee and student should be prepared to meet to discuss the proposal and plans for the combined preliminary examination and dissertation proposal defense.
- The committee chair, in consultation with the committee members, will determine when the student is ready to defend the proposal.

#### 5. Combined Preliminary Examination and Dissertation Proposal Defense

##### a. Purpose

The dissertation proposal is the guide for conducting dissertation research. The combined preliminary examination and dissertation proposal defense is designed so that students may demonstrate that the proposal is sound and that they are adequately prepared to engage in the dissertation research. The written proposal and oral defense of the proposal must convince the committee that the student is ready to proceed with the research.

##### b. Elements of the Exam and Defense

- Submission of a written dissertation proposal
- An oral presentation of the dissertation proposal
- Oral examination of the student's proposal and any related area that the committee views as relevant to the student's preparation for carrying out the dissertation research

##### c. Scheduling and Organization

- Required Forms
  - Preliminary Exam and Dissertation Proposal Defense Registration
  - Request for Appointment of Dissertation Committee
  - Request for Dissertation Committee Exception (if member is not on ISU Graduate Faculty)
- Approximately two months before the anticipated date for the combination preliminary exam and dissertation proposal defense, students submit the completed forms to the MCN Office of Student Services. All forms can be found on the MCN website, PhD program page, and under the Advising Tab.
- The graduate faculty in MCN strongly recommend that the dissertation committee meet as a whole with the student at least twice prior to the combined preliminary examination and dissertation proposal defense.

- The first meeting should occur approximately at 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 and subsequent meetings are used to provide guidance in the proposal development and to evaluate the student's readiness for the preliminary exam and proposal defense.
- No less than ten business days prior to the preliminary exam and proposal defense, students must submit their written dissertation proposal to the committee. Please keep in mind that the committee will need a minimum of 10 business days to review the proposal. If the proposal is submitted during the summer or over university breaks for review, it is important to talk with the committee to determine adequate review time. The committee will review the written proposal and formulate questions for the oral preliminary exam and proposal defense. Please see the Dissertation Proposal Rubric for evaluation criteria.
- All dissertation committee members are responsible for conducting a thorough review of the dissertation proposal and determining if the student is ready for the oral examination/defense. Committee member consensus should be confirmed by the dissertation chair. Preliminary exam/proposal defense dates should be adjusted to ensure the student is adequately prepared.
- At the oral examination/defense students should be prepared to present their dissertation proposal in approximately 20 minutes and to make informed responses to questions, a constructive critique and discuss alternative approaches for conducting the research. Students can expect to be asked questions covering the dissertation proposal review rubric. The committee may also use this opportunity to ask other relevant questions pertaining to the dissertation topic area in general such as philosophical underpinnings of design and methods, policy or ethical issues in the field. Total time for the combined preliminary examination and dissertation proposal defense is about two hours. Topics covered should include:
  - The purpose of the research
  - How this research contributes to the field
  - The design and methods for the study to be used for collecting and analyzing data, and when the student intends to conduct the research.
- The preliminary examination and dissertation proposal defense is limited to members of the dissertation committee and the student.

#### d. Evaluation Results

- The committee members will meet immediately after completion of the preliminary exam/defense to evaluate the student's performance. A simple majority of the committee is required on the evaluation outcome. The Dissertation Proposal Review Rubric may be used for the review and is available on the PhD Advising webpage under Forms.
- The committee will immediately inform the student of the evaluation.
- Evaluations will be one of the following:
  - Pass: No additional work required to begin work on dissertation.
  - Pass Conditional: The student will be asked to revise any area(s) of concern and submit the revision to the committee on a date to be determined by the committee. The student may also be asked to provide additional oral defense for the revisions.
  - Fail: The student will be required to revise the proposal, schedule a new date for the submission of the dissertation proposal and sit for the preliminary exam/proposal defense. The Committee Chair will meet with the student to coordinate support for the student, which may include additional coursework, scheduled meetings with the student's advisor, etc. Students may repeat the proposal defense for a total of three attempts. Any student who fails to pass on the third attempt or declines the

exam/defense is ineligible to progress in the program and will be dismissed from the program.

- Next Steps:
  - Note that prior to the start of dissertation research, ISU 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); and the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) must review research involving biohazards. Once these reviews are complete the committee chair submits the Proposal Approval Form to the MCN Office of Student Services and the ISU Graduate School. *The IRB process can be very time consuming so it is critical that students are aware of this and factor this into time to degree completion.* <https://research.illinoisstate.edu/ethics/human/irb/>
  - If the student has opted for the 3-paper option, the committee will discuss the type of papers the student will write and suggested journals for submission of each. Authorship and author order on each of the papers will tentatively be decided as well.
  - Upon successful completion of the defense, the student is admitted to candidacy. The committee chair and faculty advisor will complete the Admission to Candidacy form and submit to the MCN Office of Student Services who will then submit to the ISU Graduate School.
  - Students who have had their dissertation proposal approved are expected to present their proposal at a scholarly venue such as N530 - Colloquium, ISU Graduate Symposium, or a professional conference.

## 6. Completing the Dissertation

### a. Purpose

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: <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation/>.

### b. Dissertation Options and Format

With approval of their dissertation committee, the student may choose either a traditional five (or more) chapter option or a three-paper option.

- Guidelines for the three-paper option
  - Papers must be from the student's original dissertation research.
  - One of the three papers must be a complete report of the research process to include findings (databased paper).
  - The other two papers may include, but are not limited to, a review of literature, concept analysis, methods or measurement issues, and policy analyses.
  - Prior to graduation two out of the three papers must be submitted to a journal approved by the student's dissertation chair/committee.
  - Each paper, whether submitted for publication or not, must be a polished and complete draft.
- Guidelines for the traditional dissertation option
  - 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.
- Detailed information about dissertation organization may be found in the *Guide for Writers of Doctoral Dissertations*, available on the ISU Graduate School website. Specific formatting information is also available on the ISU Graduate School web site at: <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation/>

- Copyright and Permissions on Dissertations - The student must obtain written permission, when required, from a copyright holder to include borrowed material in their dissertation. ISU has a designated copyright agent and students at Illinois State University should contact the designated copyright office to determine whether a consultation and/or permissions letters will be required before the Right to Defend deadline.  
<https://library.illinoisstate.edu/services/copyright/>

### c. Evaluation of the Dissertation

- The committee will agree on the criteria for evaluating the dissertation well in advance of the oral defense using the Dissertation Review Rubric and communicate these criteria to the candidate.
- The student will work primarily with their dissertation chair to carry out the research and prepare drafts of the completed dissertation for review by the committee. Committee members should be given a minimum of ten business days to review each paper. If papers are submitted during the summer or over university breaks for review, it is important to talk with the committee to determine adequate review time.
- All dissertation committee members are responsible for conducting a thorough review of the dissertation papers and determining if the student is ready for the oral defense. Committee member consensus should be confirmed by the dissertation chair. The preponderance of evidence for evaluation will be the student's written dissertation.
- The graduate faculty in MCN strongly recommend that the dissertation committee, as a whole, meet with the student at least once prior to the dissertation defense. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an initial evaluation of the dissertation and recommend revisions. We recommend this meeting occur not less than four weeks from the anticipated defense date.

Faculty agree 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 Evaluation Rubric located on the PhD Advising webpage under Forms 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.

### d. The Dissertation Defense

1. Purpose
  - The oral defense of the dissertation provides the candidate and committee members with an opportunity to discuss the dissertation research, clarify issues, and validate the research.
2. Scheduling and Organization
  - The chair in collaboration with the committee 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.
  - The dissertation must be tentatively accepted by the dissertation examiner of the Graduate School before the submission of the final examination document. The examiner will check the dissertation to ensure that the dissertation is consistent with the selected dissertation style and the Guide for Writers of Doctoral Dissertations, published by the Graduate School. The student will follow the university procedure for submission of the dissertation. <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation/>
  - The Graduate School issues the Right to Defend.

- Ten business days prior to the defense, the chair of the dissertation committee will notify the MCN Academic Advisor, the ISU Graduate School, and the Assistant to the Associate Dean of Academics of the candidates' name, tentative title of the dissertation, committee members, date, time, and location, of the scheduled defense. An attached electronic pdf copy of the candidates' dissertation should be included in the announcement.
  - Room reservation for the dissertation defense is arranged by the Assistant to the Associate Dean of Academics.
  - The Graduate School will notify the University community of the public presentation.
  - The candidate must upload a draft of the dissertation to ProQuest prior to the defense.
3. Preparation for and Conduct of the Oral Dissertation Defense
- The defense of the dissertation is open to the academic community of the University. Subject to reasonable expectations of the chair of the candidate's committee, visitors may participate in 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 dissertation chair is responsible for conducting the defense in a constructive manner that will assist the student to integrate critique 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 of 20-30 minutes 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. The dissertation committee will first ask questions of the PhD candidate. The audience is then allowed to ask questions. While no time limit is set for an oral defense, the average defense takes about two hours.
4. Evaluation of the Dissertation Defense
- 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 attend the committee's deliberations.
  - Upon completion of deliberation, the committee will meet with the student immediately to provide feedback and any recommendations for revisions.
  - Evaluation results will be either Pass or Fail.
  - Candidates have a total of two opportunities to defend their dissertation.
  - 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.

## 5. Next Steps

- 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: <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/forms/>. The signed form must be submitted to the MCN Office of Student Services who will make a copy for the student and their file and send the original to the University Graduate School.
- Following a successful defense, the student must file the final dissertation in ProQuest as directed on the Graduate School website: <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/forms/>
- 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.
- Embargos of 6 months, 1 year, or 2 years are available without Graduate School review. When an embargo is granted, the title, abstract, author and program information will be accessible during the restriction period. The embargo periods for ProQuest and ISURd should be identical lengths of time. While embargoes are not intended to be permanent, renewals of the original embargo may be considered by the Graduate School. Embargoes longer than 2 years\* are atypical and require review by the Director of the Graduate School and the Milner Library Copyright Officer. Renewals of embargoes should be submitted to the Graduate School within 1 month of the expiration of the current embargo. \*Reasons embargos are needed for longer than 2 years are provided in the catalog.

## III. Policies and Procedures

### A. 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 Programs 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, and 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 compliant with all health and safety requirements. The Health and Safety Compliance Officer provides updates to the Graduate Programs 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 Director of Graduate Programs and graduate faculty. 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 Director of Graduate Programs 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 faculty advisors each spring semester. The PhD program leader 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:

- Updated curriculum vitae.
- 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 literature review table. Students will use reference management software to electronically keep track of their articles. Each article citation will be accompanied by a summary.
- Students must complete a PhD Student Annual Benchmarks and Review of Progress form to outline progress toward meeting the program requirements and benchmarks for the coming 12 months. In this form, students should indicate which benchmarks were exceeded, met and unmet. Students should also provide a brief explanation if benchmarks were not met.

#### b. Scheduling

Portfolios are due electronically to faculty advisor 10 business days prior to the scheduled review. PhD program leader must have the portfolio to review at least 3-5 days prior the review. The faculty advisor, PhD program leader and the student will meet no later than April 30 of each academic year.

#### c. Evaluation

The PhD program leader, the faculty advisor, and the student will meet to discuss the student's progress and make recommendations. During the evaluation, the PhD program leader 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 Director of Graduate Programs. The Director of Graduate Programs 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 faculty advisor, will be required to formulate a new plan of study and submit to Mennonite College of Nursing Office of Student Services. A copy of the revised plan of study will be sent to the PhD program leader.
- *Unsatisfactory progress, a revised of plan of study and other requirements*: If this occurs, the student, in collaboration with the faculty 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 by the PhD program leader.

#### **d. Records**

The PhD Student Annual Benchmarks/Review of Progress and Annual Evaluation Report form and plan of study will be filed at OSS in the student's academic file. In addition, students should keep copies of all documents.

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

All students entering the Nursing Program are expected to be compliant with all Health Requirements of the broader university and MCN. 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 to participate at their clinical site. Faculty will advise when this is necessary. Note that these requirements are subject to change at any time 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.

#### **C. Blood Borne Pathogens Requirement**

Students and faculty of MCN 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: <https://policy.illinoisstate.edu/health-safety/5-3-7.shtml>

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 <https://ehs.illinoisstate.edu/safety/accident/non-employee/>. 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 MCN's Associate Dean of Academics 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.

#### **D. 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 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 faculty advisors and the Director of Graduate Programs before submitting the forms to the Office of Student Services.

#### **E. 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 MCN policies and requirements.
4. Following the plan of study and goals as agreed upon with the Graduate Programs Academic 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 dissertation.

#### **F. 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/>

## G. 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: <https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conflict/conduct/code/academic.php>

## H. 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/>.

## I. 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 MCN. Confidentiality, HIPAA 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 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.

#### **J. Conditional Admission**

When a student is conditionally 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 Services.

#### **K. RN Licensure**

Applicants to and current students of the MCN 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/student responsibility to ensure that the College has current licensure information on file. MCN 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 Director of Graduate Programs. 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.

For PhD students who may not be eligible for licensure as a registered nurse, for example international students, documentation by the advisor that includes visa or other pertinent information may be used to waive the licensure requirement.

#### **L. Change of Address**

All students need to notify the Office of Student 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, Home Tab, under My Profile.

#### **M. 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 withdraws 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 Graduate Programs Academic Advisor.

#### **N. Academic Progress**

1. Progress Toward the Degree: Students are expected to adhere to their plan of study and to communicate with faculty advisor, Program Leader, Director of Graduate Programs and Graduate Programs Academic 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 MCN, 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 Program Leader, Director of Graduate Programs, and Graduate Programs Academic Advisor for placement in student's file.

#### **O. Transfer of Course Work**

Upon recommendation of the College and with the approval of the Graduate School, students may transfer up to 40% of the required program coursework, not including comprehensive exams and dissertation hours, toward the completion of the doctoral degree. The transferred coursework must be graduate level, with a grade of B or higher (or equivalent as verified on the transcript) and may or may not have been used toward another graduate level degree. The coursework being considered for transfer will be reviewed on an individual basis with final approval from the department/school. Credits more than 8 years old at the time of first registration into a degree program are not transferable from other institutions. 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. 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.

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

MCN endorses the Student Grievance Process of Illinois State University as outlined in the following website:

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

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 PhD program leader.

## 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/faculty advisor.
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 Director of Graduate Programs 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 Director of Graduate Programs 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 Director of Graduate Programs 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.

### Q. Final Course Grade Challenge Policy

A student may challenge a final course grade if the student has a reasonable belief the grade was assigned in an arbitrary or capricious manner and is unable to resolve his or her concerns with the faculty member who assigned the grade. The full policy can be found at <http://policy.illinoisstate.edu/academic/4-1-20.shtml>

#### **R. Appeal of Dismissal Policy**

Students who are dismissed from a graduate program should follow the appeal procedure outlined in the dismissal letter (summarized in the catalog). If a student is dismissed from more than one program at the same time, they must appeal each dismissal separately. See University Graduate Catalog for details.

#### **S. Readmission Policy**

Graduate students who wish to return to MCN after a lapse in registration of three semesters or more must apply for readmission at the Office of Admissions, <https://illinoisstate.edu/apply/>

Additional admission materials may be required by MCN after review of the student's previous admission materials. Those students with less than a three semester 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 Director of Graduate Programs.

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 MCN 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 of MCN on the Tech Zone website under the Nursing tab: <https://techzone.illinoisstate.edu/shop/major/mcn.php>.

#### **A. Computer Requirements**

To successfully complete the PhD program in MCN, 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, reference management programs for compiling reference lists, and Zoom for online course meetings.

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**

MCN offers the PhD program courses in both synchronous-online (via Zoom) as well as onsite instructional format. This offers the opportunity for students to participate in classes either on campus or by using the required technology from off campus locations. MCN uses technology to allow students and instructors the ability to hear each other, participate in class discussions, and share data, presentations, or other course materials.

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

- A reliable broadband internet connection
- Recommendations
  - Recognize that workplaces often restrict internet traffic which may affect your ability to access ReggieNet or Zoom. Consider working closely with technical personnel at your workplace to determine the feasibility of using this system there.
  - Be aware of internet access restrictions or quality issues at public or unsecured locations.
  - Please see specific technology requirements on the Nursing tab under Tech Zone: <https://techzone.illinoisstate.edu/shop/major/mcn.php>.
  - A camera for your computer is required for Zoom sessions.

## **V. Financial Assistance**

### **A. Process for Seeking Assistance**

Students may talk with their faculty advisor and graduate programs academic advisor to discuss financial assistance opportunities. MCN will also forward information about new opportunities directly to students by email.

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.

- 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 made for one semester at a time 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/> 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*

MCN 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.

### Doctoral Program Grants

These grants 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.

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

## **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. A Student Recommendation Request form located under the PhD program website under Advising Tab and Forms <https://nursing.illinoisstate.edu/doctoral/advising/> should be used to initiate the process of the request for letters of recommendation. 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: <http://registrar.illinoisstate.edu/ferpa/>.

## **VII. College Support and Organizations**

### **A. MCN Orientation**

MCN 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, scholarly writing tips, and the opportunity to meet your program peers. Students obtain the ISU student ID card as well as a nursing badge from the Redbird Card Office during the orientation program. Attendance at this orientation is required.

### **B. Library Orientation**

MCN 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 an 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 MCN.

## **VIII. Graduation and Commencement**

Graduation and Commencement information at Illinois State University can be found on <https://graduationservices.illinoisstate.edu/>

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.

### **A. Graduation Awards**

PhD graduates are eligible to apply for the PhD Dissertation Award the year of graduation. The award is presented at the December Commencement Ceremony. The award is designed to reward excellence and outstanding achievement. Up to two recipients will receive the PhD Dissertation Award each year. Eligible students include those who graduate with their PhD degree during the current calendar year (January 1-December 31).

The recipient of the PhD Dissertation Award will be selected based on the following criteria. Demonstration of:

1. Excellence in nursing scholarship.
2. Completion of high-quality dissertation.
3. Leadership.

4. A commitment to the nursing profession.

An invitation will be emailed to students who are in their final year of the program and are slated to graduate that year with a deadline to submit the application. The applications are reviewed by graduate faculty serving on Graduate Program Curriculum Committee and votes are placed to determine the award recipient.