

NSG 9998 COMPREHENSIVE EXAM – GUIDELINES

1.0 GOAL

The comprehensive examination (CE) allows students to demonstrate the depth and breadth of nursing knowledge, their ability to integrate concepts, principles, theories, and apply these to nursing issues.

2.0 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The graduate student must be registered for the comprehensive exam (NSG 9998) – mandatory component of Nursing doctoral program. This requirement should be successfully completed in the fourth session (Fall of 2nd year) and must be completed in order to continue the program and register to NSG 9999 – PhD Thesis.

3.0 EXAM COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

- 3.1 The thesis supervisor or co-supervisor is responsible for forming the comprehensive exam committee including choosing the Chair.
- 3.2 **The committee shall consist of three (3) voting members:**
 - **the supervisor OR co-supervisor (if applicable);**
 - **one thesis committee member;**
 - **a member who is not and will not be on the student's thesis committee.**
- 3.3 All committee members must be regular/adjunct professors in the School of Nursing at the University of Ottawa qualified to supervise graduate students. If an external member of the University of Ottawa participates, they must be a regular professor qualified to supervise graduate students in their own university. When the comprehensive exam committee form is submitted for approval, please attach a CV of any external committee members.
- 3.4 The Assistant Director, Graduate Programs (or other member of the School Executive Committee) may attend the meetings but does not have a vote.

4.0 ROLE OF THE CHAIR: PRIOR TO THE EXAM START DATE

The Chair:

- 4.1 Convenes the members of the committee to develop and/or agree on the final version of the exam questions in conformity with the exam requirements and sets all exam time/date deadlines. The exam questions are written after considering the graduate course assignments already completed and to avoid duplication (e.g. self-plagiarism).

To help prepare the CE committee for drafting the questions, some ask the student to attend the first 15 minutes to present an overview of their completed course assignments and proposed thesis. The student cannot be present when the exam questions are being written.

- 4.2 **Submission of Questions and the signed *Comprehensive Exam - Committee Composition* form** to the Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs, School of Nursing (graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca), for approval by the Assistant Director, Graduate Programs.
- 4.3 The ***Comprehensive Exam - Committee Composition*** form must include the following information:
- The names of the exam committee members;
 - The date, time and method of receiving the exam;
 - The date, time, location and the address where to submit the written component of the CE indicating the required format (paper or electronic);
 - Signatures of the CE Chair and the student.
- 4.4 Provides the exam to the student on the scheduled date and informs the Graduate Programs Administrative assistant that the process has started.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PROCEDURES

5.0 WRITTEN COMPONENT COMPLETED AT HOME

- 5.1 The committee prepares three questions one of which is compulsory and addresses knowledge in the nursing discipline. The remaining two questions are designed to assess research methods with integration of nursing knowledge in the student's program field. The student will answer one of these two questions. The questions are relevant to the student's overall plans for their thesis proposal, but the questions do not duplicate work already completed in the assignments of the PhD courses.
- 5.2 The student prepares two essays that are each 15-18 pages in length (double spaced; 2.54cm margins) excluding references, abstract, and appendices, using APA format. A table of contents is not required. If one or both essays are longer than 18 pages, the submitted written component of the comprehensive exam is **unsatisfactory** (registered as a failure), and the student must write a new exam.
- 5.3 During the CE process the student must not discuss the exam with any members of either the comprehensive exam or the thesis committees. However, the student is permitted to contact the thesis supervisor for questions that are not directly related to the comprehensive exam. For matters related to the comprehensive exam, the student should contact only the Chair of the Comprehensive Exam Committee.

- 5.4 The student has a maximum of 4 weeks to complete the written portion of the exam. This is done, when both essays are submitted to the Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs (graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca) and to the chair via email on or before the due date. TA and RA work is not imposed during this 4 week examination period to allow students to concentrate on writing the exam.
- 5.5 The Chair will distribute copies of the student's exam to the committee members and copy the Graduate programs administrative assistant.
- 5.6 All committee members have two (2) weeks to submit their independent evaluation of the written component of the CE based on the evaluation criteria for the CE of the School of Nursing Doctoral Program (NSG9998). They will submit **their evaluation to the committee chair only**. Examiners do not share their reports (or verbal evaluation) with each other until after all reports are submitted to the chair.
- 5.7 The chair holds a meeting of the committee within two weeks of receiving the committee members' independent evaluations.
- 5.8 The committee will grant one of two following verdicts for the written component of the examination (by majority of the three votes):
 - a) **Satisfactory/Pass** for both essays (accepted for oral exam)
 - b) **Unsatisfactory/Fail** for one or both essays (new written exam).If there is a conflict, the chair must make the final decision.
- 5.9 Committee members must provide reasons in writing in the event that a student receives an **unsatisfactory** result on the written portion of the exam.
- 5.10 After the committee meeting, examiners must remove any reference to satisfactory or unsatisfactory in their report for individual essays. They may also want to make minor changes based on the committee discussion. However, reports with contradictory comments across examiners may be provided to the student.
- 5.11 The chair will inform the student in writing of the committee's decision and provides their evaluative comments within two weeks of the meeting when the verdict is determined.
- 5.12 A student who receives an **unsatisfactory** result on the written component of the CE may take a written exam the following semester and no later than session #6. NOTE: An **unsatisfactory** result on the first attempt of the written component only will not be reflected on the student's transcript.
- 5.13 The supervisor is responsible for organizing the "new" exam committee. The chair and other examiners may differ from the original committee (see item 3).
- 5.14 The chair convenes the members of the exam committee to develop and/or agree on the final version of the exam questions, completes a new *Comprehensive Exam-Committee Composition* form, and submits for approval (see item 4).
- 5.15 The chair provides the new exam questions to the student on the scheduled date and informs the Graduate Programs Administrative assistant that the process has resumed.

6.0 ORAL COMPONENT

- 6.1 The oral component of the exam can only take place when the committee members have reached a successful verdict for the written component of the comprehensive exam.
- 6.2 The oral portion of the comprehensive exam is scheduled for no later than 2 weeks after the student has been notified that the written exam is satisfactory.
- 6.3 The oral portion of the exam will consist of a 20 minute presentation by the student and is intended to provide an overview of the essay (including the exam question) and may address some of the evaluative comments made by the CE committee. The oral exam is an opportunity for the student to expand her/his point of view.
- 6.4 The committee will then ask the candidate questions to clarify or expand on the answers provided in the written portion and/or the presentation. Each committee members asks questions for a minimum of 10 minutes (maximum of about 15 minutes) and there may be 2 or 3 rounds of questions starting with the examiner who is external to the thesis committee.
- 6.5 Immediately after the oral exam, the three (3) voting members plus chair will convene in camera and discuss the student's performance and will grant one of two following verdicts (by majority of three votes):
 - a) **Satisfactory** – pass oral component for both essays;
 - b) **Unsatisfactory** – failed the oral component of the exam (for one or both essays presented in the oral exam) - In this case, a new oral exam will be scheduled.
- 6.6 The chair will then invite the student to join the committee members and verbally provide the verdict.
- 6.7 In the event that a student is unsuccessful on the oral portion of the comprehensive, committee members must provide the reasons in writing.
- 6.8 A student who is unsuccessful may apply to take an oral exam in the same semester but no later than the following session. (See comprehensive exam evaluation scenarios attached).

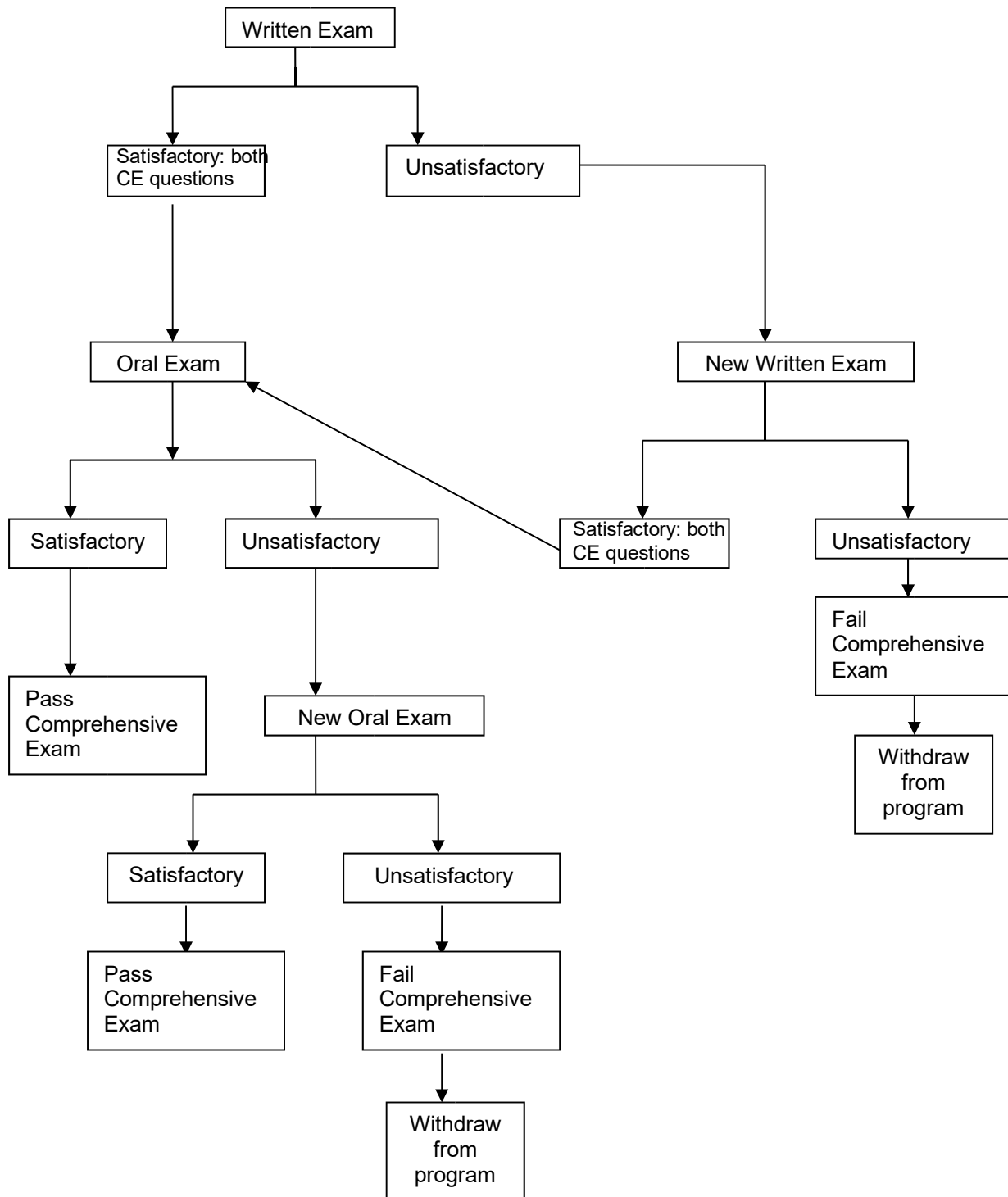
7.0 FINAL GRADE REPORT

The final grade of the comprehensive exam will either be **satisfactory** or **unsatisfactory**. The final evaluation results must be written on the official University of Ottawa School of Nursing Report of the Comprehensive Examination form.

The chair submits the final grade report to the Administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs in person or by scan attached to an email (graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca).

The Assistant Director, Graduate Programs signs the submitted report. The administrative Assistant, Graduate Programs, submits the final grade report to the academic secretariat.

8.0 COMPREHENSIVE EXAM EVALUATION SCENARIOS



Appendix: Comprehensive Examination Timeline Worksheet

Dates	Activity
	The Chair sends the comprehensive exam questions to the student in the morning (usually about 9am).
	Four weeks later, the student submits the written component of the comprehensive exam to the Administrative Assistant Graduate Programs of the School of Nursing at graduate.NUR@uottawa.ca and the chair of the CE committee (by 12 noon by email) and if necessary paper copies are dropped off.
	The Chair sends the CE committee members the written component of the exam to review with the CE criteria and a copy to the Administrative Assistant Graduate Programs.
	Two weeks later, the CE committee members submit their report to the chair by email.
	Within two weeks, the committee meets to discuss the verdict (satisfactory for both essays or unsatisfactory for both essays).
	The Chair sends the verdict to the doctoral student with the individual reports of the examiners within two weeks of the committee's meeting.
	If the written component receives a satisfactory result, the oral component of the comprehensive exam is presented two weeks after the students has received the committee's report. If an unsatisfactory/failed result on written component is obtained, the student is notified in writing and the written component is repeated with new questions.