The purpose of this toolkit is to provide general resources for the School of Nursing Doctoral Students in preparation for the General Exam and Qualifying Exam. Students should consult with their Chair/Advisor regarding questions or specifics about their exam.

Doctoral students must pass an examination after successful completion of a certain number of courses in the PhD program. Details about these exams are found in the PhD Student Handbook, but in brief, in the School of Nursing these exams include both a written and oral component. Successful completion signifies the student’s potential and the faculty’s commitment to provide scholarly resources needed to complete continuing course work and the dissertation.

The deadline for defending the examination is October 15th (or March 15th for students in alternate sequences, such as part-time students). To meet this deadline, students are strongly encouraged to begin preparing at least 3-4 months before the exam. Students typically prepare a substantive discussion of a relevant concept (a formal concept analysis) or a substantive exposition of the state of the science in an area of inquiry and research, a historical case study, or other methods paper appropriate for their area of interest. The written component of the exam is a scholarly paper that may not exceed 20 double-spaced, typed pages of text (references not included). The oral component of the exam involves an oral defense of that paper by the student for the Examining Committee. The criteria for grading both the written and the oral examination are:

- Form and organization of the written examination
- Relevance, critique, and integration of the supporting literature, and the student’s synthesis and conclusion
- The student’s ability to communicate both in writing and orally on an abstract level
- The student’s ability to translate specifics to a higher level of generalization, and develop ideas for future direction

This is an exam, so the Chair is limited in what s/he is able to provide. The Chair can guide you in the following ways:

- Review your timeline
- Discuss relevant literature, and the general structure and specific planned content of the paper
- Review your search strategy
- Review an outline of your paper
- Review your table of evidence
- Review and comment on (only) one complete draft of the written examination
- No other person may read the paper prior to formal submission of the examination to the Chair
- You may receive writing assistance from one of the Penn writing centers for structure but not content of the examination
- The Chair may help you to prepare for the oral examination

The faculty have identified poor synthesis, lack of a logical organization of document content, insufficient depth, and failure to use the appropriate reporting guidelines as the major issues in prior exams. To assist students we have compiled a list of websites and references. In addition, we will be inviting the librarian to hold a preparatory session focused on literature searches at
least once annually. Faculty hopes to offer a GE/QE Boot Camp event at least once annually. This Boot Camp will be devoted to the process of writing, offering an environment (space, time and quiet) for focused writing time associated with the GE/QE.

**Synthesis**

**Concept Analysis**

**Systematic and Integrative Reviews**

**Reporting Guidelines**


- STROBE checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies (combined)
- STROBE checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies
- Checklist for cohort studies
- Checklist for case-control studies
- Checklist for cross-sectional studies
- Draft STROBE checklist for conference abstracts

CONSORT (CONSORT stands for Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) website: http://www.consort-statement.org/

RESOURCES FOR SELECTED METHODS


VIDEOS
Documenting the Search Strategy https://youtu.be/34PcH18NT48
Managing Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria
https://youtu.be/lg58ZuJwKXs
The Flow Diagram
https://youtu.be/7LWCzERneEU

Translating the Search Strategy
https://youtu.be/TAsmsUF753I

Searching the Grey Literature
https://youtu.be/neq_Uy79aYw

Manual Methods of Identifying Studies: Cited By, Cited Reference, and Hand Searching
https://youtu.be/bfnxm5l9vhw

Guides to using bibliographic and other software to assist with systematic review
Endnote: http://guides.is.uwa.edu.au/systematic_reviews/using_endnote

Refworks: https://www2.le.ac.uk/library/downloads/refworks-for-systematic-reviews/view

Endnote and Refworks: http://libguides.sph.uth.tmc.edu/excel_workbook_home/refworks-for-SRs

Zotero: http://screencast-o-matic.com/watch/cD6fqzjUly

Nvivo: http://www.qsrinternational.com/blog/hone-your-nvivo-skills-with-literature-reviews

Mendeley (free-online program and desktop management)