Introduction to PhD Section

The Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing is designed to prepare professional nurses as scholars and researchers who will make a substantive contribution to the body of knowledge for the discipline of nursing and thereby improve health services for those who receive nursing care. The program of studies builds either on advanced clinical preparation in nursing at the master’s level (MSN to PhD), or the baccalaureate degree in nursing (BSN to PhD). Doctoral students have the opportunity to conduct dissertation research in one of the three focal areas: Biobehavioral Interaction, Caregiving and Family Health, and Protecting, Promoting and Restoring Health. In addition to structured coursework, the program builds upon a mentorship model that recognizes research skills are learned most effectively by working with a faculty mentor, who provides opportunities to practice the use of research techniques and the design and execution of original research within a focused program of research.

Academic Policies of the Graduate School and School of Nursing

Prospective doctoral students are required to refer to the most recent UAB Graduate School catalog and web site [http://main.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=1183] for information concerning academic policies, registration, conduct and appeal, student health and auxiliary services. The most recent University of Alabama School of Nursing Graduate Student Handbook (located on the PhD section of the School of Nursing web site [http://www.uab.edu/son/grad_phd.htm]) is a required reference for specific School of Nursing policies and procedures. School of Nursing policy mandates that all doctoral students enrolled in nursing courses in which they are engaged in patient care and are "at risk" must show evidence of licensure as a registered nurse in Alabama, malpractice insurance, current CPR certification, and annual certification of blood-borne pathogens (OSHA) training. Evidence of Hepatitis B vaccination is required on admission to the School of Nursing.

Goals of the PhD Program

The PhD program prepares graduates who will be able to:

1. Critique models, concepts, and theories for their utility in defining, organizing, and expanding the body of nursing and health-care knowledge within the focal areas.

2. Contribute to nursing science through theory-testing and theory-generating research that is disseminated through professional publications and presentations to the scientific community.

3. Conduct health-care investigations based upon scientifically sound conceptual and methodological decisions about research designs, measures, and statistics.

4. Reflect a consistent commitment to human values and high ethical standards in nursing practice and science.

5. Initiate and collaborate in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary endeavors that contribute to the health and functional status of individuals and communities, and that foster the ability of families,
including caregivers, to facilitate the health of family members.

The PhD program design allows students to select one of three areas: Biobehavioral Interaction, Caregiving and Family Health, and Promoting, Protecting and Restoring Health. In addition to core program course requirements, students complete at least 9-16 credits of required courses and electives in their selected focal area.

**Funding**

Admissions are competitive. Scholarships and fellowships are available to support study and are awarded on a competitive basis.

**Admissions**

Admission requirements include:

1. MSN degree from an accredited institution in the United States, or approval by the Minister of Education for schools of nursing in foreign countries, equivalent to that in the UAB School of Nursing is required for the MSN to PhD option. A BSN from an accredited institution in the United States, or approved by the Minister of Education for schools of nursing in foreign countries, equivalent to that in the UAB School of Nursing, is required for the post-baccalaureate PhD option (BSN to PhD).

2. A cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 overall (based on a 4.0 scale) on all graduate-level coursework.

3. A combined score of at least 1100 on the verbal and quantitative sections of the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) plus an indication of writing skills from the third component of the GRE. (The scores must not be over 5 years old.)

4. Satisfactory TOEFL scores for applicants from non-English speaking countries (minimum 550).

5. Evidence of successful completion of a graduate-level research methods course and a graduate-level introductory inferential statistics course; currency of knowledge in these areas is required upon entry. Post-Baccalaureate PhD students complete the research methods and introductory inferential statistics courses during the program.

6. Computer literacy and access is required with proficiency in word processing and e-mail correspondence, as well as familiarity and experience with the Internet. It is recommended that each student have his/her own personal computer meeting the specifications of the School of Nursing (specifications are available on the School of Nursing website), including a microphone.

7. Eligibility for licensure as a registered nurse in Alabama.

8. A written goal statement that evidences congruence between the applicant’s research interests, one of the program focal areas, and School of Nursing faculty research.

9. At least one sample of independent work that demonstrates the applicant’s scholarship potential (for example, a paper, proposal, report, publication, etc.).

10. A current curriculum vitae.

11. Three references from individuals with expertise to comment on the applicant’s capability for research and scholarship (for example, university professors, employers); at least one of the references must be from a doctorally prepared nurse.

12. A personal interview.

Doctoral students who have completed the MSN are usually admitted once a year to begin the doctoral course sequence the following fall term. The deadline for early review of completed applications is January 15 to be eligible for early notification of admission for the subsequent fall term. Interviews must be completed by February 15 to be eligible for early notification of admission. However, completed applications will be accepted until June 1 as space is available. Students in the Post Baccalaureate option may be admitted for any term but should complete the application process including the interview by midterm in the term prior to the term for which they
are requesting admission.

**Admission Application Fee**

A non-refundable admission application fee of $35 is charged to all applicants.

Application forms, information concerning admission, and general academic counseling are available at the School of Nursing. Requests for forms and information should be directed to:

*Office of Student Affairs, School of Nursing, NB 105*

UAB
1530 3rd Avenue South
Birmingham, Alabama 35294-1210
(205) 975-7529
www.uab.edu/son

**PhD Focal Areas**

The PhD focal areas are described as follows:

**Biobehavioral Interaction**

Health is affected by both the mind and the body. This focal area addresses the importance of biobehavioral (mind/body) interaction among psychological, social, environmental, and biological factors as they affect actual and potential health outcomes.

This focal area will emphasize theories and concepts related to biobehavioral interaction, methodological issues, in-depth exploration and critical analysis of current understanding in biobehavioral research, the effectiveness of interventions based on biobehavioral factors, and future directions for biobehavioral research.

Students can study biobehavioral interaction from various developmental, situational, and cultural perspectives in any healthy or ill population.

**Caregiving and Family Health**

Family caregivers assume more prominence in their role of preserving, promoting, and restoring health within our streamlined health-care system. Family caregivers have an important impact on the development and maintenance of healthy behaviors and are also the backbone of long-term and end-of-life care, giving care to elders and children in the home.

The overall purpose of the Caregiving and Family Health focal area is to generate a body of knowledge for improvement of the family’s capacity for caregiving and health promotion, as well as to stimulate family health. Students can study caregiving and family health in families:

* with varied developmental and situational challenges, at different points along the health-illness continuum and in the family life cycle,
* in acute, chronic, or terminal health conditions,
* at risk for health problems,
* from diverse sociocultural ecologies.

**Promoting, Protecting and Restoring Health**

The goal of this focal area is to prepare nurse researchers who will address promoting, protecting, and restoring health through practice and research in clinical and community settings. Conceptual approaches relevant to health enhancement and disease prevention are studied. This focal area is intended to prepare graduates who contribute to the discipline of nursing and expand the knowledge base for nursing practice in the area of health enhancement and disease prevention. Students will gain the theoretical and empirical knowledge necessary to:

* examine health risk factors, health status, and health disparities in specific populations such as the under-served/under-represented ethnic minorities or those groups with job-related risks,
* design and test interventions that may improve health and improve performance in an effort to prevent illness and injury,
* conduct research independently and as part of multidisciplinary research teams.

**Curriculum**

Students with a masters degree in nursing are required to successfully complete a minimum of 65 semester credits beyond the Masters in Nursing. The 58-65 semester credits of required coursework are allocated as follows:

**Core** (theory, research design, methods, statistics)
25 credits

**Focal Area** (includes nursing courses which sup-
port the focal area)
9-16 credits

**Research Practicum**
6 credits

**Dissertation**
18 credits (minimum)

**Total**: 58-65 credits

The curriculum is designed to provide students with a core foundation in theory, scientific integrity, research design, methods and statistics (25 credits). A focal area concentration (9-16 credits) allows students to develop depth of knowledge and contributes to an individualized program of study approved by the dissertation committee. A research practicum (6 credits) provides the student with a mentored research experience to strengthen skills in the conduct of research.

Students in the Post Baccalaureate PhD (BSN to PhD) option follow these same curricula with the addition of 15 credits of master’s level coursework designed to enhance their research focus (for a total of 73-81 semester credits, depending on the focal area chosen).

Upon completion of the program of studies, the student completes a comprehensive exam to demonstrate proficiency in the core, focal area, and research practicum courses.

**Online Course Requirements**

A student participating in an online course with the School of Nursing will need to ensure their computer meets minimum standards. These standards have been posted on the School of Nursing web site at [www.uab.edu/son/online.htm](http://www.uab.edu/son/online.htm). Students should review this information prior to enrollment to ensure their on-line experience is a successful one.

**Sample Full-Time Plan of Coursework Prior to Dissertation**

In addition to the total of 6 credits of Research Practicum, scheduled in any combination of credits (1-6) during these terms, and the focal area credits (9-16), the following courses are required. An additional 15 credits of masters-level coursework is required for those in the Post Baccalaureate PhD option.

**Semester 1**
- Theory Building in Nursing 3
- Philosophy of Science 3
- Introduction to Statistical Software Packages 2

**Semester 2**
- Linear Models for Clinical Nursing Research 3
- Qualitative Research Methods 2

**Semester 3**
- Designs for Nursing Studies I 3
- Principles of Scientific Integrity 3

**Semester 4**
- Designs for Nursing Studies II 3

**Semester 5**
- Methods and Measurement in Nursing Research 3

**Part-Time Study**

Part-time programs of study are available and involve completing 6 credits per term. Two terms of full-time study (9 or more semester hours) are also required.

**Time Frame**

The PhD in Nursing is designed to be completed in three to four years of full-time study or four to five years of part-time study. All work to be applied to the PhD must be completed within seven years of initial enrollment in the program.

**Post-Baccalaureate PhD Option**

Students in this option will complete only 15 credits of designated master’s level coursework in addition to the required PhD coursework described in PhD program materials.

This program of study will allow students to go from a bachelor’s degree in nursing directly to a doctor of
philosophy degree. Thus, this option facilitates preparation of nurse researchers who are earlier in their career trajectories and who will have more years to build knowledge within an area of focus. By requiring only 15 credits of master’s-level work within our program and placing baccalaureate-prepared individuals immediately on research teams and with a mentor, this option will allow students to complete the required coursework in 7-8 terms of full-time study before embarking on the dissertation, which requires a minimum of one year depending on the study design and other factors. Applicants are required to submit all application materials required for the PhD program admission except that the Baccalaureate in Nursing from an accredited institution in the United States, or approved by the Minister of Education for schools of nursing in foreign countries, equivalent to that in the UAB School of Nursing, will be substituted for the requirement for the Master’s in Nursing.

Required additional coursework for this option is as follows. Certain requirements may be waived with documentation of equivalent coursework.

**Biobehavioral Interaction**
- Research Design (3 semester credits) NUR 605
- Inferential Statistics (3 semester credits) NUR 695
- Advanced Nursing (6 semester credits of nursing courses at the 600 level or above are required as approved by the Doctoral Program Director upon recommendation of the advisor or committee chair).

**Caregiving and Family Health**
- Research Design (3 semester credits) NUR 605
- Inferential Statistics (3 semester credits) NUR 695
- Focal area elective at graduate level (3 semester credits of graduate coursework appropriate to the family focus).
- Advanced Nursing (6 semester credits of nursing courses at the 600 level or above are required as approved by the Doctoral Program Director upon recommendation of the advisor or committee chair).

**Promoting, Protecting and Restoring Health**
- Research Design (3 semester credits) NUR 605
- Inferential Statistics (3 semester credits) NUR 695
- Epidemiology (3 semester credits) NUR 630

* Advanced Nursing (6 semester credits of nursing courses at the 600 level or above are required as approved by the Doctoral Program Director upon recommendation of the advisor or committee chair).

For additional information, contact Dr. Carol Dashiff, Chair, Graduate Studies, (205) 934-6852; e-mail address: [dashiffc@uab.edu].

**Requirements and Policies**

**PhD Degree Requirements**
Candidates for the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing degree will be expected to complete:

1. Coursework and experiences based on the student’s background and career goals, with grade point average of B or better;

2. A statistical analysis or computer science sequence instead of a foreign language.

3. A comprehensive examination administered upon completion of an individualized program of studies to assess scholarly proficiency;

4. A written dissertation representing competency in research, individual inquiry, critical analysis, and in-depth treatment of a health-care problem in the focal area. The investigation must make a genuine contribution to knowledge in the field of nursing and demonstrate the candidate’s acquaintance with the literature of the field and the proper selection and execution of research methodology. A final defense of the original research effort is required.

**Transfer of Credit**
Previously earned graduate credit that has not been applied toward another degree (either at UAB or elsewhere) is eligible for transfer into the student’s current program of studies. Credits may be earned in a variety of formats. Ordinarily no more than 12 semester hours of transfer credit can be applied to a degree program. All transfers must be initiated by the student and require the approval of the Chair, Graduate Studies. An application for transfer of credit will not be considered until the student has completed at least 12 semester hours of graduate credit in doctoral study and is in good academic standing. Once trans-
fer credit has been accepted, it will be included in the calculation of the grade point average in the student’s current degree.

Graduate credit earned with a grade of B or above while a graduate student in another accredited graduate school may be considered for transfer. If a student earns credit toward one School of Nursing graduate degree and is later admitted to another degree, unused credits from the previous degree are eligible for consideration for transfer into the current degree.

Repeated Courses
Graduate students may be allowed to repeat courses for graduate credit with the permission of their graduate advisor and the Chair, Graduate Studies. All courses taken and all grades earned are permanently recorded on the student’s transcript. The first time (i.e. second attempt) a student repeats a course he or she receives the grade earned. If a course is taken three or more times, all grades after the first are averaged. The School of Nursing Student Affairs Office must be notified of the repeat at the time of the completion of the second attempt. (The calculation using the repeat grade is not automatic).

Postdoctoral Study
Postdoctoral studies in nursing will be individually arranged, based upon a student’s learning needs in specific areas of interest and faculty expertise.

Academic Conduct and Appeal
The relationship between the student and the graduate faculty and administration is based on mutual respect and a set of expectations each has for the other. The school expects mature and honorable conduct from every student and reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary action when such conduct is not forthcoming. Information regarding the student appeals process can be obtained from the Office of Student Affairs. Procedures related to allegations of academic misconduct can be obtained from the UAB Graduate School Catalog located on the School of Nursing web site.
Course Descriptions

PhD Degree

NUR 706/706Q Theory Building in Nursing—The nature of knowledge in practice disciplines with an emphasis on critical analysis of selected theories and concepts, approaches to theory and conceptual development, and criteria for evaluation of theory. 3 hours.

NUR 730 Special Topics—A special-topic seminar with variable focus. 1-3 hours.

NBB 760/760Q Biobehavioral Foundations in Nursing Research—This course will focus on biobehavioral interactions among psychological and cognitive domains, social and environmental domains, and biology as they affect health outcomes. Emphasis will be placed on theories and concepts of each domain of biobehavioral interactions. 3 hours.

NBB 761/761Q Biobehavioral Research State of the Sciences—This course will focus on in-depth exploration and critical analysis of current biobehavioral interaction research including conceptual and methodological issues. In addition, the course will focus on examining the effectiveness of interventions on biobehavioral domains and health outcomes and identifying future directions for research. 3 hours.

NBB 762/762Q Biobehavioral Research Seminar—This course will focus on the in-depth understanding of a selective area of biobehavioral research. Biological interactions with psychological, cognitive, social, and environmental domains will be included in relation to actual and potential health outcomes. Current understanding in a selective area of biobehavioral research will be critically analyzed for conceptual and methodological issues. 1-3 hours.

NFH 760/760Q Family Health and Caregiving Across the Life Span—A survey of current research related to the reciprocal relationship between the family and health and caregiving within the context of the family life span. The student develops an understanding of health and illness within a framework of human development, interaction, and adaptation, as well as cultural and gender norms. 3 hours.

NFH 761/761Q Theory Development in Family Health and Caregiving—Skill development in evaluating selected family and caregiving theories for their current or potential relevance to research on family health and individual health in the context of the family, and family caregiving processes in health and illness. 3 hours.

NFH 762/762Q Family Research Methods—Skill development in the critical analysis and application of family research methods as a foundation for conducting family research. Experience is gained in instrument evaluation and selection, decision-making regarding level of variable formation, model validation through multiple measurement, and selection of appropriate statistical tests to capture the complexity and dynamic nature of the family. 3 hours.

NPR 760/760Q Conceptual Foundations for Promoting, Protecting, and Restoring Health—This course will focus on theories, concepts, and research related to promoting, protecting, and restoring health. Students are expected to analyze cultural, social, racial, and gender influences on health and research related to health promotion, protection, and restoration. 3 hours.

NPR 761/761Q Interventions to Promote, Protect, and Restore Health—This course will focus on in-depth exploration and critical analysis of current intervention research including conceptual and methodological issues. In addition, the course will focus on designing research to evaluate the outcomes of interventions designed to promote, protect, or restore health of individuals or community groups. 3 hours.

NRM 770/770Q Designs for Nursing Studies I—The beginning phases of the research process, including exploration of a domain of problems, formulation of research questions, integration of conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and critique and review of knowledge that supports an identified area of research. Ethical and cultural issues related to the conduct of research will be included. 3 hours.
NRM 771/771Q Methods/Measurement in Nursing Research—Overview of the theories, principles, and techniques that yield reliable and valid measurement of human systems. 3 hours.

NRM 772/772Q Designs for Nursing Studies II—Sampling, design, analysis plans, presentation of results, findings, and conclusions in various research designs and the reintegration of the findings into the body of knowledge in an identified area of research. Ethical and cultural issues related to the conduct of research. 3 hours.

NRM 773/773Q Qualitative Research Methods—This survey course focuses on the analysis of research traditions that guide the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the development of nursing science. Included are naturalistic, conceptual, interpretive, and analytical research methods such as phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative analysis. In addition, the course includes an analysis of strategies for mixed method designs. 2 hours.

NST 775/775Q Introduction to Statistical Software Packages SPSS and SAS—Special emphasis of this laboratory course will be on the use of statistical packages (SAS and SPSS) in the creation of data files, data entry, manipulation of data, descriptive analysis, and selected statistical techniques. 2 hours.

NST 776/776Q Linear Models for Clinical Nursing Research—Survey course on the application of advanced General Linear Model and related techniques in health-care research. 3 hours.

NST 777/777Q Multivariate Statistical Methods for Clinical Nursing Research—Survey course on the application of multivariate techniques in health-care research. The course will focus on application of multivariate statistical methods to nursing-related research questions, with emphasis on interpretation within clinical nursing research problems. 3 hours.

NUR 790/790Q Independent Study in Nursing—Pass/Fail. 1-9 hours.

NUR 791 Independent Study in Nursing Practice—Pass/Fail. 1-9 hours.

NUR 798 Research Practicum—A series of course credits taken throughout the student's doctoral coursework to provide continuous research experience under the supervision of the mentor. Credits may vary by semester, from a minimum of 1 hour of credit to a maximum of 9 hours of credit. 1-9 hours.

NUR 799 Dissertation Research—PREF: Comprehensive Exam and admission

Note: Course numbers that include a “Q” designate an online course. Courses that list two course numbers (of which one has a “Q” designation) may offer the course both as an online and “on-campus” offering or may alternate between an online and an “on-campus” course. Contact your PhD Advisor or the SON Office of Student Affairs for more information.

Disclaimer
Although this catalog intends to reflect currently any policies or rules of the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama referred to or incorporated herein, students are cautioned that changes or additions to such policies or rules may have become effective since the publication of this material. In the event of such a conflict, the current statements of Board policy contained in the official minutes and manual of rules, bylaws, and guidelines shall prevail. Thus, the provisions of this catalog are not to be regarded as an irrevocable contract between the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (or any of its schools) and the student. The University reserves the right to make changes as required in course offerings, curricula, academic policies, and other rules and regulations affecting students, these changes to be effective when determined by the appropriate authority within the University. These changes will govern current and formerly enrolled students. Registration of all students is accepted subject to these conditions.