

PhD in Nursing

About the PhD Program

The doctor of philosophy in nursing (PhD) program prepares clinical scholars, educators, and researchers for leadership roles in a variety of academic, industry, and healthcare settings. Because the knowledge and skills needed to produce excellent health-related research is not discipline specific, the PhD program does not require a prior degree in nursing. Indeed, we have had PhD students with academic preparation in health administration, health education, medical ethics, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, public health and social work.

The MU Sinclair School of Nursing (MUSSON) offers a challenging and yet enriching PhD program with two options. The PhD curriculum, program requirements, and program outcomes are the same whether you choose the Online PhD option or the International Residential Nursing PhD option. Only the method of course delivery varies. Additional details can be found on the Sinclair School of Nursing PhD Program Options webpage (<https://nursing.missouri.edu/academic-programs/phd/>).

- **Online PhD Program Option:** PhD coursework may be accessed online through the Online PhD program option by learning over the World Wide Web using the Canvas learning management system. This option also requires a 3 Day On Campus visit (held the first week of the summer semester on the Columbia campus) the first summer of enrollment and 4 Day On Campus Intensives every April until coursework is completed (see PhD On Campus Dates). Because the program is online, students are responsible for obtaining the required technology for successful participation in synchronous online courses (see Technology Requirements). Additionally, students are responsible for all the costs associated with travel and housing for the On Campus Intensives;
- **International Residential PhD Option:** Through the International Residential PhD option, international students attend the MU campus hybrid classes in Columbia, Missouri. The International Residential PhD student attends the hybrid classes in person, while the Online student cohort participates virtually via videoconferencing software. International Residential PhD students may also enroll in traditional residential course offerings through the MU Sinclair School of Nursing and the rest of the MU campus. Students in the International Residential PhD option must enroll in 4.5 credits during their first summer and maintain full-time status by enrolling in 9 credits each fall and spring term thereafter. Of the 9 credits each term, at least 6 credits must be either traditional face-to-face or hybrid coursework in order to qualify for and retain the F-1 or J-1 student visa status. The remaining 3 credits each term may be taken 100% on-line.

Degree Requirements

MU requires a minimum of 72 credit hours, including 15 hours of 8000-9000 level coursework exclusive of readings, research, problems and independent study experiences, beyond the bachelor's degree for the PhD. The student's doctoral committee may recommend that up to 30 hours of post-baccalaureate graduate credit from a regionally accredited university be transferred toward the total hours required for the doctoral degree. With program approval, up to 6 hours of coursework for which professional credit was received may be counted toward the 72 credit-hour requirement. It is the responsibility of the doctoral committee to determine whether it is appropriate to transfer credit; however, the Graduate School must make the final review of the transfer request

to determine if the credit meets the minimum guidelines. Ultimately, the student's doctoral committee, in collaboration with the student, determines the student's plan of study and total credit hours necessary to adequately prepare the student to successfully complete their dissertation research. Typical post-baccalaureate student takes ~77 credits. Typical post-master's student takes ~59. Typical post-clinical doctorate student takes ~48 credits. The PhD curriculum is divided into two categories:

- **Foundational Core** - Minimum of 29-36 credit hours (leadership and technology, responsible conduct of research, philosophical, theoretical & scientific basis, epidemiology, biostatistics &/or data science, research design, qualitative and quantitative methods, grant writing, on-campus intensive immersions (residencies)
- **Individualized Specialty Area** - Minimum of 27-39 credit hours of of research focus seminars, interdisciplinary collateral coursework (coursework taken outside the School of Nursing that helps to support the dissertation research topic), faculty mentored research practicum experiences, specialty area applied sciences including education or leadership courses, dissertation research, and electives.

The PhD program at the MU SSON can be completed in three to five years of full time study, depending on whether the student entered as a post-baccalaureate or a post-graduate degree student. International Residential PhD students are required to be enrolled in full-time study. Part-time study also is available for students in the Online option.

Once the plan of study is completed, you prepare for your doctoral comprehensive examination, develop your research proposal, and begin your dissertation research project. The doctoral dissertation and its defense are the program's culmination and demonstrate your ability to identify and pursue research that meets the highest of professional standards.

B-1 Qualifying Process for the Post-Baccalaureate to PhD Program Option

Upon provisional admission to the program, a temporary adviser is assigned to the student. Two additional faculty members are selected to serve on the Qualifying Examination Committee, which approves the courses taken prior to the qualifying process. The student selects both a substantive content area in nursing and a general research interest. To fully qualify for the doctoral program, Post-Baccalaureate to PhD students must earn at least a grade of B in the following:

- NURSE 7010 Biostatistical Foundations for Health Researchers
- NURSE 7087 Leadership and Technology Institute
- NURSE 7160 Scientific Foundations for Health Sciences
- P_HLTH 7952 Research Methods in Public Health or P_HLTH 8420 Principles of Epidemiology
- Nine additional graduate credits, typically nursing applied sciences or collateral courses

The student initiates the qualifying process by enrolling in three credits of NURSE 8900 Research Practicum in Nursing with a member of the PhD program committee. The course syllabus and course contract for NURSE 8900 can be found on the PhD Forms webpage.

Comprehensive Examination Process

Through the PhD Comprehensive Examination process, the student demonstrates his/her ability to address the theoretical, methodological and substantive issues of his/her field of study. The examination tests the breadth and depth of knowledge and the ability to integrate ideas

across research focus areas. The student must be enrolled to take this examination and it may be administered only when MU is officially in session. The student is not allowed to sit for the PhD comprehensive examination until the last semester of course work or when course work is substantially completed, all incomplete grades are satisfied, and the PhD Competencies are met.

The Comprehensive Exam, which is prepared by the student's PhD program committee, has a written component followed by an oral section. The written component of the examination is completed at home or another site of the student's selection during five consecutive days. The oral defense is a two-hour examination by the PhD program committee. The two sections of the examination must be completed within one month. The student is expected to complete the Comprehensive Examination within five (5) years of enrollment in the PhD program and it must be completed at least seven (7) months before the final defense of the doctoral dissertation. Additional details of the process can be found at <https://nursing.missouri.edu/academic-programs/phd/>.

Dissertation Requirements

The culmination of the PhD degree is the completion of a written doctoral dissertation. The dissertation must:

- Be written on a subject approved by the candidate's doctoral dissertation committee
- Embody the results of original and significant investigation
- Be the candidate's own work.

Within the MU Sinclair School of Nursing, the PhD Dissertation process consists of:

- Development of a dissertation proposal
- Approval of the proposal by the doctoral dissertation committee
- Approval of the research project by the Health Sciences Institutional Review Board
- Ethical conduct of the research project
- Writing the doctoral dissertation
- Public defense of the doctoral dissertation
- Approval of the dissertation by the candidate's doctoral dissertation committee
- Submission of the written doctoral dissertation in an approved format.

Students have five (5) years from completion of the PhD Comprehensive Exam to complete the doctoral dissertation.

Admissions

Students interested in the PhD program are encouraged to apply for admission as early as possible. All admitted students are required to start the PhD program during the summer semester.

Early Acceptance Deadline: January 1st Recommended for applicants desiring to be full-time students who are planning to apply for a competitive fellowship(s) and international residential PhD option applicants who need time to obtain a visa and move to Columbia, MO prior to classes starting in early June.

Regular Acceptance Deadline: March 1st

Applicants are required to meet two sets of minimum qualifications for admission: the requirements of the Sinclair School of Nursing PhD program (<https://nursing.missouri.edu/academic-programs/>

phd/) and the minimum requirements of the Graduate School (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions/eligibility-process/>). Because requirements vary, you *must* refer to a degree program's graduate admission page to learn about specific admission criteria, application deadlines, eligibility and application process. Your application materials will be reviewed by both the Graduate School and the degree program to which you've applied before official admission to the University of Missouri.

NOTE: Applicants who do not meet the minimum GPA requirements or do not have a cumulative GPA must submit acceptable scores on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and the exam must have been taken within the last 5 years.

Admission Contact Information

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