

Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
School of Nursing
Master's Program in Nursing
Doctoral Program in Nursing

Key Assessment Findings

The School of Nursing has identified two key outcome measures for the graduate programs: performance on comprehensive examinations and the results of certification examinations.

Performance on comprehensive examinations reflect how well the student has understood the material presented during the course of study. Comprehensive examination questions in the School of Nursing are reviewed by graduate faculty and revised each semester. These examinations are graded by two examination readers on a pass/fail basis, and in the case of a disagreement a third reader is requested to review the examination. Grading rubrics are used for all graduate comprehensive examinations. Comprehensive examination results are reported in Table 1.

Table 1 Comprehensive Examination Results AY 2009/2010

Category of Comprehensive	Number writing	Number passing	2009/2010 % passing	2008/09 comparison
Master's Level	19	16	84.2%	95% (N=22)
DNP Level	1	1	100%	N/A (no graduates)
Ph.D Level	7	5	71.4%	72% (N=11)

Performance on national certification examinations are the second outcome measure used by the School of Nursing graduate programs. National certification examinations are required in order to be licensed as an advanced practice nurse. The American Nurse Credentialing Center (ANCC) administers the Adult Nurse Practitioner, Family Nurse Practitioner, and Advanced Public Health Nurse examination. The Pediatric Nursing Certification Board administers the examination for the pediatric nurse practitioner. Results of these examinations are reported in Table 2 for the 2009 graduating class. It should be noted that the ANCC does not report results of the examination by graduation date, therefore we can only assume that those who wrote the examination in the current year were 2009 graduates. The School of Nursing has contacted the ANCC with a request to include graduation dates on future reports but so far this request has been unsuccessful. This problem has been recognized by the accreditation body for academic nursing programs (CCNE) and is being addressed at the national level.

Table 2 Certification Examination Pass Rates for January 2009 to December 2009

Examination	# eligible	# taking	# passing	% pass 2009	% pass 2008
Adult Nurse Practitioner/ Adult Health CNS	8	5	4	80%	100% (N=3)
Advanced Community/Public Health*	5	0	0	N/A	N/A
Family Nurse Practitioner	4	4	3	75%	100% (N=3)
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner	5	5	5	100%	100% (N=5)

*The Advanced Community Public Health certification examination is relatively new and is not required by many employers of community health graduate nurses.

Curricular Improvements

It should be noted that small numbers in the graduate student cohort writing a particular certification examination create a large percentage change if a single student fails the certification examination. The School of Nursing monitors the certification examination pass rates and has set a target of 100% pass rates on all certification examinations. In order to achieve this goal the faculty have determined that admission selectivity should be monitored for the incoming graduate class as well as continuing improvements in instructional process to assure that entering students are supported to gain essential skills. During the last academic year the following measures have been implemented to improve student recruitment, admissions, and instructional process.

- An experienced graduate recruiter has been added to the SON staff and is working closely with the Director of Graduate Programs and the SON Deans to improve graduate recruitment and the applicant pool.
- A new application screening rubric has been designed and tested to assure uniform evaluation of graduate application. The rubric quantifies student writing ability as well as the quality of student references.
- Students in all MSN programs take mock certification examinations and are assisted to understand the strategies for being successful in the examinations.

- Graduate comprehensive examinations for the MSN students are now take home examinations. These new comprehensive examinations have been pilot tested and evaluated by SON graduate faculty. Students are assisted to prepare for their comprehensive examinations by SON faculty who hold several review sessions immediately prior to the examination.
- Ph.D and DNP comprehensive examinations are both graded using a rubric that allows analysis of each section of the comprehensive examination.
- MSN students who will provide direct patient care are learning patient clinical skills with the assistance of standardized patient examinations in the nursing skills laboratory. The MSN faculty are focused on creating more opportunities for students to learn patient assessment and management strategies in the laboratory environment prior to and during their clinical experiences.
- The School of Nursing reorganization provides additional administrative support to enable SON faculty to define and more closely monitor student outcomes, engage in research, and improve instructional methods.