

**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 (SON) has identified two key outcome measures for the graduate programs: performance on comprehensive examinations for doctoral students, the capstone project and the results of certification examinations for master of science in nursing (MSN) students.

For doctoral students, performance on comprehensive examinations reflect how well the student has understood the material presented during the course of study. Comprehensive examination questions in the SON 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 2015/16

Category of Comprehensive	Number writing	Number passing	% Passing	<i>Comparison 2014/15</i>
Master's Level	22	22	100%	93%
DNP/PhD Level	25	24	96%	33%

1Commencing in Summer 2016, the faculty elected to replace MSN comprehensive exams with a summative Capstone Project, whereby MSN students must retrieve, evaluate and propose an evidence-based practice project.

Performance on national certification examinations are the second outcome measure used by the School of Nursing for the MSN program. National certification examinations are required in order to be licensed as an advanced practice nurse. The American Nurse Credentialing Center (ANCC) and the American Association of Nurse Practitioners Certification Program (AANPCP) both administer the Adult Nurse Practitioner, Adult-Gerontological Nurse Practitioner, and the Family Nurse Practitioner National Certification examination. The Pediatric Nursing Certification Board administers the examination for pediatric nurse practitioner graduates. Results of these examinations are reported in Table 2 for the 2015 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 2015 graduates. The School of Nursing has contacted the ANCC with a request to include graduation dates on future reports and has met with a representative of the ANCC but thus far this request has been unsuccessful. This problem has been recognized by the accreditation body for academic nursing programs, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) and is being addressed at the national level.

Table 2 Certification Examination Pass Rates 2015-2016

Examination	# eligible	# taking	# passing	Pass Rate	2014-2015 comparison
Adult/Gero Nurse Practitioner	2	2	2	100%	
Family Nurse Practitioner	9	9	9	100%	
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner	5	5	5	100%	

The AANCP program reports results if 3 or more students take the examination ANCC.

1Note: Only 3 students completed this exam and the ANCC exam is the preferred examination, where students were 100% successful.

### Curricular Improvements

It should be noted that the small cohorts of students taking the certification examinations are always a factor in judging the results. For purposes of accreditation the School of Nursing requests pooled five year aggregate reports in order to report a more stable rate. The SON's previous five year (2008/09 to 2012/13) pass rates were as follows: Pediatric Nurse Practitioner 100%; Adults Nurse Practitioner, 83.95%; Family Nurse Practitioner, 92.01%. All of these rates exceed the national passing standards and this year all programs witnessed 100% certification pass rates.

The curricular improvements which have been made in the past academic year include the following:

#### ***Alignment of the DNP Residency with the DNP Essential Areas of Practice***

Faculty have given significant attention to the design of the residency program for the DNP program which is offered only on-line. The program accreditation guidance contained in the *Essentials for Doctoral of Nursing Practice Education* (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2006) emphasizes preparation for leadership in practice, with a focus on eight essential areas of nursing and healthcare. The SON DNP courses and residencies are designed to map to these essential areas to assure that DNP students receive both didactic and experiential experience in each of these areas. During our recent accreditation visit by CCNE, evaluators found our DNP program met all key accreditation elements and CCNE standards.

#### ***Strengthened the Doctoral Biostatistics Content***

The SON Doctoral Curriculum Committee and a subcommittee of faculty who teach quantitative methods have realigned the statistics courses in the doctoral programs to assure that students receive solid grounding in the basic statistical methods necessary for both PhD and DNP courses. They have redesigned the PhD sequence to assure that PhD students gain experience in instrumentation development, statistical modeling, and use of secondary data. The DNP students

are provided with a basic introduction to SPSS and applied analysis as well as the principles of epidemiology.

***Completed all course designs for on-line DNP***

All on-line PhD and DNP courses have been designed by full-time SON faculty members who have worked cooperatively with experienced on-line course designers. Once the courses are designed and delivered at least once by CUA faculty, they may be delegated to adjunct faculty. Currently, the SON is recruiting and mentoring adjunct faculty for both PhD and DNP courses.

***Mentoring contracts for Ph.D. students***

PhD students in the School of Nursing are required to have a supervised research mentor experience as part of their course work. Mentoring contracts and reports have been redesigned to support analysis of the accomplishments of the mentor experience and the contribution the experience makes to the student's research plan and patient outcomes.

***Summer clinical residency for on-line Master's students***

The SON has designed and delivered the first summer clinical residency required of all on-line students. These students are required to come to campus for an intensive week of clinical skills demonstration and evaluation. This experience assures that MSN students are able to demonstrate their clinical skill to CUA faculty prior to completion of their clinical sequence of courses. The placement of the summer clinical residency assures that clinical skills development can be assessed prior to the completion of the clinical course sequence and a remediation plan can be designed if any weaknesses are noted.

***Review of Master's curriculum and interdisciplinary content in adult nurse practitioner program***

The SON in cooperation with the National Catholic School of Social Service has introduced interdisciplinary education in adult-gerontology practice. Throughout the past academic year adult gerontology nursing students and students in the Master of Social Work (MSW) program have worked together in teams to assess, plan and implement care for a variety of clinical conditions. The case-study method has been extensively used in this program and has facilitated group learning and discussion in interdisciplinary practice.