Department of Nursing

Comprehensive Examination Study Guide

Accreditation Statements

The baccalaureate degree program in nursing/master's degree program in nursing and/or post-graduate APRN certificate program at Angelo State University is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
655 K. Street, NW Ste. 750
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 887-6791
Fax: (202) 887-8476

http://www.aacn.nche.edu/ccne-accreditation

In addition, all nursing programs have full approval status by the Texas Board of Nursing.

Texas Board of Nursing
333 Guadalupe #3-460
Austin, TX 78701
Office: (512) 305-7400
Fax: (512) 305-7401
http://www.bon.texas.gov/index.asp

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Overview

The graduate nursing program requires students to complete a comprehensive examination to evaluate student attainment of program outcomes. This study guide provides information to guide the degree-seeking graduate nursing student through the comprehensive exam process.

As per the Angelo State University (ASU) [Graduate Catalog](#), MSN students must complete a written comprehensive examination as part of the eligibility requirements for graduation.

Comprehensive examinations are offered in the fall and spring (typically November and April). Dates for testing are posted in advance on the ASU Nursing webpage at [Comp Exam](#).

The Comprehensive Examination

MSN students must complete a two-part comprehensive examination as part of the eligibility requirements for graduation. The written comprehensive examination is to be taken at the Archer College of Health and Human Services building testing center in San Angelo, Texas.

The purpose of the written comprehensive examination is to determine MSN Core Curriculum Competency in areas of research, evidence-based practice, theory, policy, ethics, leadership, and informatics for advanced nursing.

Students complete an additional comprehensive examination in the specialization area (Family Nurse Practitioner or Nurse Educator). The specialization comprehensive examination is completed independently per the program track requirements.

The Nurse Educator specialty track comprehensive examination is designed to evaluate nursing education competencies. The Nurse Educator specialty track comprehensive examination is administered during the final semester of the student's program of study. The exam is administered as a take-home exam. The exam is emailed to the student and completed by the student within a one-week time frame.

The Family Nurse Practitioner specialty track comprehensive examination is designed to evaluate Family Nurse Practitioner competencies. The Family Nurse Practitioner specialty track comprehensive examination is administered during the final semester of the student's program of study. The exam is administered as a multiple choice exam via the Internet.

The graduate faculty members with specialty track expertise review the specialty track competency exams. Satisfactory/Passing grade is based upon the student's ability to demonstrate competency in the specialty track.

Planning for Success

Successful completion of the graduate nursing program is based upon synthesis and application of master's level advanced nursing knowledge taught throughout the program. The comprehensive examination validates the MSN Graduate Program Student Learning Outcomes have been met and knowledge synthesis has occurred.

MSN Graduate Program Student Learning Outcomes

Upon program completion, the graduate will be prepared to:

1. Integrate nursing and related sciences into the delivery of advanced nursing care to diverse populations.
2. Apply organizational and systems leadership skills.
3. Design and implement quality improvement initiatives.
4. Integrate best research evidence to improve health outcomes.
5. Utilize informatics, healthcare technology, and information systems.
6. Advocate through system-level policy development.
7. Employ effective communication in inter-professional teams.
8. Synthesize the impact of health determinants for the provision of culturally relevant health promotion/disease prevention strategies.
9. Practice at the level of a Master's prepared nurse.

Each course in the curriculum builds upon foundational knowledge needed for the advanced nursing role. Planning with the end in mind for successful exam completion, faculty recommends students"

- Reflect on knowledge gained from major assignments and readings as courses are completed.
- Review competencies as outlined in the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) *The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing* and identify examples of coursework demonstrating achievement.
- Save resources such as syllabi, textbooks, major assignments, and references for review.
- Schedule ample time to complete a comprehensive review and synthesis of major concepts, theories, and evidence used during coursework.

Eligibility

a) The student is eligible to take the written comprehensive exam when the student has completed or is in the semester of the final core coursework.
b) The student has completed the application at [Application for Comprehensive Exam](#)

Students with Disabilities

ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall based on disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAAA) and subsequent legislation.

If a student requires special accommodations, the student must contact Student Disability Services to apply for accommodations. Once the student has completed the application for accommodations, the student will notify the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Comprehensive Written Examination Details

a) The exam will begin at the designated time. Students should arrive a minimum of 15 minutes before the start of the exam to allow time to set up at the examination station.
b) Students are required to show a photo ID (ASU One Card or Driver's License) for entrance into the exam.
c) Students must have a login for Blackboard to take the exam.
d) The comprehensive exam is limited to four (4) hours.
e) Students are not permitted to have any personal belongings or electronic devices at the exam testing station. Personal belongings and electronic devices can be stored in the examination room with the examination proctor.
f) Students will be provided with paper at the testing station for use during the exam.

*If University or Department closures have been mandated and students are unable to be on campus to take the Comprehensive Written Examination, an email notification will be sent to students with instructions on how the exam will be administered.

Evaluation of Comprehensive Written Examination

a) Each student examination is reviewed by two (2) graduate faculty members
b) A Pass/Fail grade is administered using the ***Grading Rubric for Written Comprehensive Exam*** (attached)
c) Students are notified of examination results within seven (7) business days of the exam via the student's ASU Email.
d) A student who fails the written comprehensive examination will be administered an oral examination by the graduate nursing faculty. **A student who fails the**

written and oral comprehensive examination may petition the graduate faculty for permission to repeat the written examination. If approved by the faculty, the student will be allowed to take another written examination no sooner than the next semester or summer session. Any student who fails the second comprehensive examination will be dismissed from the graduate program.

Preparing for the Comprehensive Written Examination
a) Review [The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing](#)
b) Look over all major assignments submitted in each core course for a review of the skills learned in each core course.
c) Study and provide answers for each section of the component study guide (see below) while working through the core course to capture information for studying.
d) Allow ample time to study for the comprehensive written examination.

Research/Evidence-Based Practice Component Study Guide

Students completing the Master of Science in Nursing degree at Angelo State University should be able to answer the following:

a) What is the purpose of a review of literature?
b) What does PICOT represent and how is PICOT used to develop research/clinical questions?
c) What are the levels of evidence and why are the levels of evidence important?
d) Define reliability and validity of data collection measurements/instruments and discuss why validity and reliability are important.
e) What is a sample? What are sampling techniques? Distinguish between random sampling and non-random sampling.
f) Differentiate between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.
g) What are independent and dependent variables? How are the variables used in research?
h) Derive the meaning and interpret the following statistical findings:
   a. p Value
   b. Confidence Interval
   c. Effect Size
   d. Type I and Type II Error
   e. Power
i) What is the difference between statistical and clinical significance?
j) How does Evidence-Based practice contribute to nursing science?
k) What are the steps in the Evidence-Based practice process?
l) How do the steps of Evidence-Based practice guide the implementation of EBP changes?

Resources:

Gray, J.R., Grove, S.K., & Sutherland, S. (2017). *Burns and Grove's the practice of nursing research: Appraisal, synthesis, and generation of evidence. (8th ed.).* St. Louis, MO: Elsevier

Melnyk, B., & Fineout-Overholt, E. (2015). *Evidence-based practice in nursing and healthcare: A guide to best practice. (3rd ed.).* Philadelphia: Lippincott

Theory Component Study Guide

The purpose of theory is to guide nursing research and practice. Therefore, theory should reflect a significant reality. The theory must possess clinical or practical value. Students must understand the underlying premise of a theory to appropriately apply the theory to the research process.

Select a theory from your master's education that you feel guides you professionally. Review the theory using the following questions discussing how to best incorporate the use of the theory into a research problem.

    a) How do you know the theory is clear and consistent?
    b) How are the major concepts defined?
    c) Are relationships described for these concepts?
    d) What assumptions, values, and/or beliefs underlie the development of the theory?
    e) Is the theory understandable? Does it make sense?
    f) Does the theory address a problem that is important to nursing research? Practice?
    g) How does this theory address the concepts included in the nursing paradigm?

Theory study questions:

    a) Why is theory important in nursing practice? Research?
    b) Define the following classifications of theory:
        a. Metatheory
        b. Grand Theory
        c. Middle Range Theory
        d. Practice Theory
    c) How is theory used in research?
    d) What is the nursing metaparadigm.
    e) Describe the four concepts of the nursing metaparadigm.
    f) Discuss the relationship among theory, practice, and research.

Resources:

The following websites will provide useful information about nursing theory:

Nursing Theories and Theorists--Nurseslabs

McEwen, M., & Willis, E.M. (2019). Theoretical basis for nursing (5th ed). Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer

Policy/Ethics Component Study Guide

Advanced Practice Nurses act to influence healthcare policy to improve health, access, safety, and quality of care, remove disparities, and reduce the cost of healthcare.

There are many strategies used by nurses to influence policy which include but are not limited to political analysis, letters to the editor, contact with policymakers, running for office, publishing articles, serving on boards, volunteering on campaigns, preparing issue briefs, conducting research, or participating in community activities.

For the preparation of the comprehensive exam content on the leadership role of Master's prepared nurses in health policy issues, students should be able to answer the following questions:

a) What process would you use to initiate a health-related policy change? Be prepared to give at least two specific examples of how you would approach resolving a health-related issue through policy change.

b) Define key ethical terminology and be prepared to provide examples of ethical dilemmas from clinical practice that would require advanced nursing advocacy.

c) What theoretical and ethical framework (s) will you employ to guide your actions related to policy development and change?

d) What are the skills that advanced practice nurses use to help shape the health delivery system?

e) What spheres of influence (community, workforce/workplace, government, interest groups) could you employ in policy development and/or change for an identified problem?

f) What potential barriers to policy development and change for a specific health-related issue could prevent successful change?

g) How would you address barriers to change?

h) How would you identify potential facilitators of change?

i) What steps would you take to successfully advocate change through collaboration with facilitators?

j) How do current and emerging technologies influence or hinder your ability to implement policy change?

k) What ethical ramifications would you need to consider when utilizing technology to promote change?

l) What are the major healthcare and education policy initiatives currently influencing healthcare?

Utilizing the information from answers to the above questions, you should be able to demonstrate your ability to **apply** the information to a health problem/diagnosis needing policy assessment, formulation, or change.

Resources:

Abraham, L.K. (1993). *Mama might be better off dead.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Mason, D.J., Leavitt, J.K., & Chaffee, M.W. (2016). *Policy and politics in nursing and healthcare* (7th ed.). with a revised reprint on the Affordable Care Act. St. Louis: Elsevier/Saunders.

Leadership and Roles in Advanced Nursing Component Study Guide

The application of leadership and practice principles at both the patient and system levels is used to promote high-quality and safe patient care, reduce overall healthcare delivery costs, improve access to care, and influence political factors that affect interdisciplinary care.

Task:

Utilize organizational data to identify a potential or actual problem in your workplace setting/other healthcare setting and use the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) process to address the problem.

Questions:

a) What challenges do healthcare organizations and leadership teams face as a result of the identified problem?

b) How does the identified problem effect the organization, staff, and/or consumer?

c) According to the current evidence-based practice guidelines, what strategies can be developed or utilized to best address the identified problem within the specific organization?

d) How can Kurt Lewin's change theory be used to implement a proposed solution to the identified problem?

e) What ethical challenges must be considered when implementing a proposed solution?

f) What budgetary constraints must be considered when implementing a proposed solution?

g) How will overall project success be measured and evaluated?

Resources:

Behavioral Change Models. (2016). *Diffusion of innovation theory.* Retrieved from http://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/MPH-Modules/SB/BehavioralChangeTheories/BehavioralChangeTheories4.html

Dolan, C. (2017). Moral, ethical, and legal decision-making in controversial NP situations. *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners, 13*(2), e57-e65. Retrieved from https://www.npjournal.org/article/S1555-4155(16)30615-8/pdf

Hall, L. L. (2019). Plan-do-study-act: Accelerate quality improvement in your practice. American Medical Association STEPS forward. Retrieved from https://edhub.ama-assn.org/steps-forward/module/2702507

Hoskins, K., Grady, C., & Ulrich, C. (2018). Ethics education in nursing: Instruction for future generation of nurses. *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing, 23*(1). Retrieved from http://ojin.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicals/OJIN/TableofContents/Vol-23-2018/No1-Jan-2018/Ethics-Education-in-Nursing.html

National Association for Healthcare Quality. (2018). *NAHQ code of ethics and code of conduct.* Retrieved from https://nahq.org/about/code-of-ethics

Melnyk, B.M., Fineout-Overholt, E., Gallagher-Ford, L., & Stillwell, S.B. (2011). Sustaining evidence-based practice through organizational policies and an innovative model. *American Journal of Nursing, 111*(9), 57-60. Retrieved from https://easydb.angelo.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.23046778&site=eds-live

Morrison, M. (2014). *Kurt Lewin three step model change theory.* Retrieved from https://rapidbi.com/kurt-lewin-three-step-change-theory/

Whitehead, D., Dittman, P. W., & McNulty, D. (2017). *Leadership and the advanced practice nurse: The future of a changing health-care environment.* Philadelphia, PA: FA Davis

Informatics Component Study Guide

The list below provides suggested topics to review for the Informatics and Technology section of the MSN Comprehensive Examination.

1. Review current and emerging technologies supporting safe practice environments and optimizing patient safety, cost-effectiveness and positive patient outcomes.
2. Analyze how the collection, analysis and use of data reduce risk factors and improve patient outcomes?
3. Appraise policies and procedures for the presence and incorporation of ethical standards and best practices in the use of health and information technologies and the subsequent impact of this use on health care environments.
4. Evaluate the processes involved in providing oversight and guidance for the integration of technology in documenting patient care and positive patient outcomes.
5. Examine current information and communication technology, resources and best practices related to patient and family/significant other education.
6. Appraise current and emerging technology in patient care environments supporting lifeline learning for healthcare providers and lay communities.

Resources

McBride, S., & Tietze, M. (2019). *Nursing Informatics for the Advanced Practice Nurse: Patient Safety, quality, Outcomes, and Inter-professionalism. (2nd Ed.).* Spring Publishing Company, New York, N.Y.

McGonigle & Mastrian (2018). *Nursing Informatics and the Foundation of Knowledge* (4th ed.).   Jones and Bartlett Publishers LLC, Burlington, MA.

American Nurses Association (2015) Nursing Informatics: Scope and Standards of Practice (2nd. Ed.). Silver Spring, MD: Author.

Helpful Link

American Nurses Informatics Association

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Comprehensive Exam Grading Rubric

EVALUATION CRITERIA	UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	GOOD	EXCELLENT	RATING Q 1	RATING Q 2	RATING Q 3
(15 pts) All required information is clearly and completely provided.	(0-10 pts) Bulleted points not addressed and/or information provided is not clearly related to question posed.	**(10.5-11 pts)** Two or more elements of bulleted points omitted. Most of provided response is clearly related to question posed.	**(12-13 pts)** One or more elements of bulleted points omitted . Response clearly related to question posed.	**(13.5-15 pts)** All bulleted points addressed. Substantive response with logical framework.			
(10 pts) Responses are supported by examples, details and illustrations	**(0-6.5 pts)** No examples/illustrations are provided or are inaccurate.	**(7-7.5 pts)** Examples, details or illustrations are simplistic and demonstrate some evidence to support assertions, however may lack appropriate application.	**(8-8.5 pts)** Examples, details or illustrations demonstrate evidence of basic level of understanding of topic explored	**(9-10 pts)** Examples, details or illustrations demonstrate comprehensive and in depth understanding of topic explored.			
(40 pts) Critical thinking is evident	**(0-27.5 pts)** Fails to demonstrate ability to evaluate and interpret information. Analysis is simplistic and fails to demonstrate ability to solve problems systematically.	**(28-31.5 pts)** Demonstrates adequate ability to evaluate and interpret information at basic level. Analysis lacks full development. Illustrates limited ability to solve problems systematically.	**(32-35.5 pts)** Demonstrates high level ability to evaluate and interpret information. Fairly comprehensive analysis. Illustrates clear ability to solve problems systematically.	**(36-40 pts)** Demonstrates exemplary ability to evaluate and interpret information. Comprehensive analysis. Illustrates outstanding ability to solve problems systematically.			
(30 pts) Ability to synthesize component ideas into a viable solution is evident	**(0 -20.5 pts)** Does not demonstrate ability to assemble evidence for solution creation. Does not relate supporting evidence to topic.	**(21 pts)** Multiple errors in assembling evidence for solution creation. Conclusions have some logic but contain multiple errors of reasoning.	**(24-26.5 pts)** Minor errors in assembling evidence for solution creation. Conclusions generally logical, with minor errors of reasoning.	**(27-30 pts)** Outstanding ability to assemble evidence for solution creation. Conclusions are logical and reflects an informed evaluation of evidence.			
(5 pts) Punctuation, grammar, sentence structure reflect graduate level writing skills	**(0-3pts)** Abundance of errors in grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, ideas.	**(3.5 pts)** Noticeable errors in grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, usage.	**(4 pts)** One or two errors in grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, usage.	**(4.5-5 pts)** No errors in grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, usage.			
				TOTAL SCORE	**0**	**0**	**0**

NOTE: Maximum number of points per item in left hand column. Total maximum Score equals 100.

Pass = 70 points or above on each question; **Fail** = less than 70 points on any question