

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR DOCTORAL EDUCATION IN NURSING
QUALITY CRITERIA, STANDARDS, AND INDICATORS (QCSI)
FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMS IN NURSING

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Introduction

This document is the outcome of the work of the QCSI committee that began its deliberations in 2000, soon after the formation of the International Network for Doctoral Education in Nursing [INDEN]. Extensive virtual correspondence among the committee members during two phases of the work focused on developing the standards of doctoral education in nursing worldwide. The major focus of the QCSI is on research-intensive doctoral programs with or without required coursework. The document was circulated to all INDEN members for the third time in Nov. 2003 and their input is incorporated in this document.

Committee members were fully aware that the task of articulating criteria, standards, and indicators that would be applicable in all countries would be full of challenges. We maintained our optimism by reminding ourselves that the desired outcomes are what we should aspire to achieve as fully as possible within the given context, being aware that some of these will not apply at present to all schools/colleges of nursing, let alone to all countries. However, we were pleasantly surprised to find that many of the criteria, standards, and accompanying indicators were indeed recognized in many schools/colleges of nursing around the world, implicitly if not explicitly.

The committee sought to receive national level information for developing the QCSI document, but this was not possible in the case of some countries. We are grateful that the American Association of Colleges of Nursing continued its leadership in the area of quality of doctoral programs, and published the second edition of its Position Statement titled "*Indicators of Quality in Research-Focused Doctoral Programs in Nursing*" in November, 2001. With AACN's permission, we have used the content of its position statement liberally in preparing this document; yet, every effort was made to incorporate information from other countries to make it truly an international document. In the synthesis process of a myriad of comments received from INDEN members, if points were made indicating that some criteria, standards or indicators did not apply to the current situation in some countries, those elements were not included in the final version.

We anticipate that as doctoral programs and the environments in which they exist change, the QCSI will be revised periodically to better reflect the evolutionary changes.

On behalf of INDEN we thank each member of the committee for her/his contribution to the development of this document, and acknowledge them below:

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Sincerely,

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Quality Criteria, Standards, and Indicators for Doctoral Programs in Nursing

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Standard	Indicators (recommended requirements)
Student	Admission	Demonstrate intellectual capacity, knowledge and experience in research, and professional career plan.	Grade Point Average (GPA)(3.0 on 4.0 scale) or Weighted Average Mark (WAM); Graduate Record Examination (GRE)(50 th -60 th percentile of all test takers in health fields). Equivalent test may be used where the GRE is not in common use. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language: 550-560 required). Acceptable level of research knowledge and professional career plan during oral interview, if interview is required. License to practice as a professional nurse in their country of origin or where currently living. Licensure for international students required only in home country.
		Students' goals congruent with faculty expertise and institutional resources.	Match between students' research goals and objectives with faculty members' research expertise and scholarship, and institutional resources.
	Progression	Successful in obtaining intra- & extramural academic and research funding and awards.	Evidence of academic, service, and research awards.
		Meets the milestones of the program.	Successful in passing of all assigned work and/or examinations, if examination(s) is/are required. Demonstration of acceptable participation and/or presentation in doctoral and other seminars if research is the only component of the doctoral program.

		The administration should have systems in place to ensure that faculty provides regular and appropriate supervision of student progress.	Presence of a monitoring system for regular and appropriate supervision of student progress. Written documentation of reviews of student progress, and outcomes; a record of actions are kept in an appropriate administrative location.
		Establish a pattern of productive scholarship, collaborating with researchers in nursing and other disciplines in scientific endeavors.	Evidence of presentations and written scholarly papers appropriate for publication or presentation at national and international meetings
	Graduation	Demonstrate qualification for graduation as specified by the program.	Pass qualifying examination, if required. This may involve both written and oral examinations. Pass a final oral examination, defending the dissertation. Approval of dissertation research proposal and completed research. Publication in national and international journals. Presentations at national and/or international conferences. Other indicators specific to the program.
	Time Frame	Graduate within acceptable period.	A majority of full time students graduate within 3-5 years post master's degree. [Note: while it is not common in most countries to require the master's degree, a large number of programs within the US require the MS degree. The issue is under consideration].
Faculty	Teaching, advisement, and mentoring	Provide students with challenging learning experiences	Evidence by student report of the degree of diverse intellectual perspectives (e.g. analytical and leadership strategies for dealing with social, ethical, cultural, economic, and political issues related to nursing, health care, and research).

	Research and scholarship	Qualified for doctoral education.	Faculty have earned doctorates in nursing or related fields. Faculty demonstrate sufficient evidence of scholarship. Faculty demonstrate evidence of extramural support for their research and for their success in obtaining funding support for their students, such as fellowships or stipends). Teaching experience in nursing education prior to working with doctoral students.
		Have expertise on the subject area appropriate for student learning.	Evidence of expertise on content/subject areas.
		Have track records of research and scholarship.	Evidence of research track records through the presentation of complete faculty resumes or vitae.
	Research and teaching	Meet the requirements of the parent institution for graduate research and doctoral education.	Satisfy the requirements of the parent institution for research and doctoral education.
	Practice and Service	Demonstrate clinical competence. Provide service to professional organizations/societies at national and international levels.	Evidence of certificates of nursing specialties and membership in professional organizations/societies.
	Teaching, research, practice and service	Fulfill diverse responsibilities and roles of faculty with competence.	Demonstrate fulfillment of diverse faculty responsibilities and roles including teaching, research, service, and mentoring.

Program	Curriculum	The emphasis of the program of study is consistent with the mission of the parent institution and the discipline of nursing.	Consistency with philosophy and mission of the parent institution and nursing program.
		Include core courses and other courses appropriate for doctoral degree in nursing, if courses are required.	Description of core courses such as nursing science, theory development, research methodologies for qualitative and quantitative research, ethical considerations in research, dissertation seminars; other courses such as leadership, political and policy analyses.
		Research areas are presented to familiarize students with faculty's research expertise.	Students have an opportunity to hear descriptions of faculty research in concentration areas (e.g. women's health, bio-behavioral science, methodological development, application to practice areas).
		Emphasis is on nursing science and research training.	Evidence of emphasis on nursing science and research training in the curriculum, through course syllabi and student evaluations.
		Quality of dissertation or thesis meets acceptable norms for doctoral study.	Evidence of presentation or publication in national or international peer reviewed journals.
		Protection of Human/Animal subjects in research.	All students receive formal training in ethics and the protection of human and animal subjects during research.
		Course descriptions are written and available to students and faculty in detail.	Description of courses regarding credits, hours, methods of teaching and evaluation. Different types of courses are offered, including dissertation research, and a balance exists across different types of courses.

	Scholarship	The importance of research is clearly stated as a goal by both the university and the school of nursing (SON).	Explicit commitment to research by the parent institution and the nursing program, as demonstrated by available resources, laboratory space, support personnel, release time from teaching assignments for research, and the like.
		The institution/SON value, support, and provide rewards to faculty and students for their research and scholarly activities.	Evidence of publications (articles and books) in peer-reviewed journals and by reputable publishing company, and presentations at national and/or international conferences.
		The institution/SON should have a well-developed system to foster quality research.	Evidence of mechanisms in place that foster quality research training (e.g., supervised research experiences, peer review, mentoring, consultation, exchange of expertise).
	Learning environment	The environment is supportive of students' learning.	Evidence of mentorship, intellectually challenging environment, and financial assistance available for students.
		The program has a process in place that fosters socialization of students to doctoral education, and facilitates interaction among students, and faculty and students.	Mechanism in place for socialization among students, and between students and faculty members. Evidence of close mentor-student relationships (e.g. number of regular meetings, e-mails, or chat rooms). In the case of distance education, e-mail and internet access is available, accessible and affordable. "Chat rooms" on the Internet are set up for students pursuing research in related fields.

		The program should have sufficient number of faculty to facilitate learning.	Generally each faculty member should serve as the major adviser/chair for no more than 3-5 doctoral students in total during the dissertation phase; and several students in earlier phases of study.
	Administration	The administration should have systems in place to ensure that faculty carry out regular and appropriate supervision of the students' progress.	Evidence that faculty meet regularly with students and monitor student progress through accepted system and policies within the institution.
	Program description	Sufficient materials and information are available about the school and job opportunities for students.	Appropriate information is provided on program features and requirements. These may include brochures, catalogues and/or websites describing the program, faculty profile, financial support, scholarships, grants, fellowships, facilities, resources, and parent institution etc. Evidence of career advising and placement (e.g. faculty provides recommendation letters when needed).
Resources	Human	Number of faculty is appropriate for the number of doctoral students.	Judgments are made in view of faculty responsibilities in various units of the institution; thus, variation would be expected.
		Number of support staff is sufficient to support faculty and students.	Number of technical staff and support staff is commensurate with the size of the program.
		Salaries should be appropriate for the titles and roles.	Competitive to market levels within the region or country for all personnel.

	Support services 1) Office of research	Research infrastructure is appropriate for facilitating research and education.	Administrative structure is in place with appropriate technical staff for consultation on statistics, and peer discussion/evaluation of research projects.
	2) Information technology	Advanced computing facilities with Internet access are in place. Advanced information technology should promote education at off-sites.	Advanced computing facility with Internet access to national and international networks available. Advanced information technology available for distance education.
	3) Library	Library has sufficient holdings, search engines, and databases.	Library holdings include international literature search facilities, data base resources, and systems for inter-library loans.
	4) Institution and nursing unit	School building provides sufficient space for faculty and student activities.	Adequate space available for teaching and research, such as offices, seminar/conferences, and students' socialization (e.g. student lounge, locker space and mail box, etc.).
		School is equipped with sufficient resources.	Adequate resources available for teaching and research (e.g. computers, printers, photocopiers, facsimile machines, video, teleconference capability, and audiovisual materials).
		School has relevant and ancillary facilities for education, training and research.	Adequate resources such as clinical agencies and other ancillary resources available (e.g. affiliated hospitals, community health agencies, private clinics, etc.).
		The school has various sources of funding for student research.	Evidence of internal and external funding sources for students (e.g., fellowships, traineeships, studentships). Reports of the percentage of doctoral students fully and partially supported with financial aid.

Evaluation	Program evaluation	Program evaluation system is in place to demonstrate the school's ability to provide intellectually challenging learning experiences to students.	Students function as effective scholars upon graduation. Evidence that program objectives are met.
		Program evaluation system is in place that is systematic, and ongoing, and focuses on areas identified under Program. Similarly, summative program evaluation is carried out every 5-7 years.	Students demonstrate gradual and cumulative fulfillment of program goals as they progress through the program. Evidence of ongoing and periodic evaluation mechanisms in place. The evaluation includes process and outcome data related to the school's specific mission and goals.
		Program evaluation system adheres to established ethical and process standards for formal program evaluation.	Confidentiality and rigorous quantitative and qualitative analyses are practiced and utilized. Program assessment done by relevant stakeholders: (e.g. evaluation by faculty, by students at exit interviews, and by graduates, peer groups, employers and external examiners).
		Program evaluation system provides comparison of program processes and outcomes with the standards of its parent university and selected peer institutions within nursing at national level.	Evidence of national rankings and/or comparative statistics available for the program.

		Program evaluation system includes adequate human, financial and institutional resources and facilities, including information technology.	Evidence of adequate resources and facilities (e.g. number of students, graduates, faculty and employers). In some countries, the national educational evaluation organization evaluates with written and site visit every 7 years.
		Program evaluation system assesses leadership positions that faculty, students, and alumni hold.	Number of leadership positions held by faculty, students, and alumni in both nursing and relevant interdisciplinary organizations at national and/or international levels.
		Program evaluation system assesses the number of faculty, students and alumni who publish and present, and are invited to serve on influential expert panels, special task force groups at national and international levels.	Number of publications in peer reviewed journals at national and/or international levels; and the number of invited expert panel members or special task force groups at national and international levels.
	Students	Outcome for students' performance are identified and evaluated.	Evidence of successful outcomes by awards, scholarships, research, publications, presentations, and creative work recognized by national and/or international organizations on competitive basis.
		Employment rates after graduation are comparable to the national norms of peer nursing schools and of related fields.	Evidence of competitive employment rate (e.g. over 90%).

		Program evaluation system assesses the level of students' theses that are published.	A majority of student theses resulting in publications in referred journals or by reputable publishers at national and/or international levels.
	Faculty	Evaluation system prospectively assesses faculty performance.	Evidence of achievements in national and international organizations on competitive basis (e.g. honors; extramural research grant awards and fellowships that faculty have received; peer-reviewed presentations and publications of research, theory or philosophical essays; consultations at national and international levels, scientific review activities such as with government/NIH study sections and other grant application review groups; other creative work, editorial reviews of manuscripts submitted to refereed journals, and mentoring of junior faculty and students).
	Instructional program	Program evaluation should include all courses including electives.	Ongoing evaluation of all courses is evident.
		Proportions of courses and dissertation research hours/credits is in line with the types of degree.	Evidence of appropriate proportions for the nature of doctoral program (e.g. 60% of the total credits to course work and 40% dissertation research, if course work is required; or the majority of the credits to dissertation, if coursework is not required).
	Resources	Program evaluation system includes the adequacy of human, financial and institutional resources, and facilities including information technology.	Evidence of adequate resources and facilities (e.g. number of students, graduates, faculty and employers, and advanced information technology).

	Alumni	Program evaluation system should assess the achievements of alumni.	Evidence of achievements by alumni (e.g. honors, awards, external funding at 3-5 years post graduation, and other distinguished services).
		Program evaluation assesses the level of impact of alumni on the profession and society.	Evidence of the impact of alumni (e.g. distinguished awards for achievements that made impact on profession and society). Employers' reports on satisfaction with graduates' leadership and scholarship on regular basis.

Major references and supporting documents

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. *Indicators of Quality in Research-Focused Doctoral Programs in Nursing*. 2001. [www.aacn.nche.edu].

National Institute of Nursing Research. *Nursing Research Training in Research Intensive Environments*. National Institute of Nursing Research/OPAE, June 11, 1993. [www.nih.gov.ninr].

Association of Graduate Schools in the Association of American Universities. *Description of Successful Graduate Programs and Policies*. Association of Graduate Schools in the Association of American Universities. [www.ags.ucsd.edu/ags.html].

Additionally, information was provided by many members of the committee from their institutions, their doctoral program requirements and quality assurance mechanisms in place in those settings.