



GUIDELINES FOR MN THESES

Within the Nurse Educator (NUED) and Advanced Practice Leadership (APL) options of the Graduate Program in Nursing, students have the option of completing a Capstone assignment or a thesis. Students in the Master of Nursing (MN) and Master of Science in Health Informatics (NUHI) (the double degree) may complete a thesis or a research project (see guidelines). For MN students wishing to complete a thesis, there are required minimum standards. These include:

For APL and NUED students:

- A demonstrated ability to integrate theory and advanced practice nursing
- Usually a minimum average of A (85%) in all completed courses through the end of the third semester of fulltime study
- Student-advisory and potential supervisor consultation
- Confirmation and recommendation of a thesis supervisor
- Completion of, or enrolment in, a minimum of one additional approved research course for a total of 22.5 units.

Processes and Considerations: Informing One's Choice

An MN thesis is considered to be a systematic inquiry into an area of interest related to nursing practice, leadership, or education. The goal of the thesis process is to gain experience in and knowledge of the research process through engagement with original research (empirical or philosophical), secondary data analysis, evaluation, study replication, to name a few examples. Knowledge of thesis processes and associated time frames are useful parameters that can inform ones' choice of thesis completion.

Theses should be designed such that they can be completed reasonably within a one-year time frame and are the equivalent of 6.0 units. Successful thesis completion within this time frame requires recognition of several factors. These include:

Selection of Supervisor and Thesis Committee

Upon enrolling in the School of Nursing graduate program, each NUED and APL student is assigned a faculty advisor. It is expected that students will discuss their initial research plans with their faculty advisors as part of the process of coming to select an appropriate thesis supervisor. If appropriate, the student's faculty advisor may become the supervisor, or the advisor may step aside if a different supervisor is selected. Each student is required to have a

Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS)-approved supervisor, selected from the School of Nursing (SON) faculty members, after completing coursework through the end of the 3rd semester of full-time study.

For students in NUED or APL, the supervisory committee consists of a supervisor and a minimum one FGS-approved committee member.

For NUED or APL students, the additional faculty member but need not be appointed until the student has identified the research focus and formulated some preliminary plans. For the double-degree students, both co-supervisors must be identified at the time of request for the thesis option. It is understood that students may connect with other faculty members and practice colleagues, including preceptors, to discuss their research interests. The final committee membership is a collaborative decision between student and supervisor.

When the thesis is completed and ready for defense, there is an oral defense. At the oral defense, FGS requires “an external examiner who has had no previous involvement with graduate supervision of the candidate. The external examiner may be from the home academic unit (SON), provided that there is at least one non-unit member on the supervisory committee” (Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar, p.32). In some instances, students include an outside member on the supervisory committee. In such situations, the external examiner can be from nursing.

Students must work closely with, and under the guidance of, their supervisor and supervisory committee. As such, supervisor and committee availability, as well as turn-around time for draft submissions must be factored into one’s timeframe.

What Constitutes a Thesis?

The purpose and scope of a thesis is determined by the student and supervisory committee. A thesis may include original empirical research, secondary data analysis of qualitative and/or quantitative data, a concept analysis, a JBI or other form of knowledge synthesis study (e.g. systematic review, scoping review) or a method of inquiry approved by the supervisory committee.

Preparation and Approval of Thesis Proposal

Development and committee approval of a research proposal requires several steps. While proposal lengths may vary and an outline suitable for all research studies is not possible, conventional processes of formal inquiry that are addressed in a proposal include but are not limited to:

- Identification and development of a problem statement or nursing phenomenon of concern that link the research to nursing knowledge
- Background and significance of the topic or area of concern/interest
- Aims/objectives of the inquiry (or research questions)
- Preliminary literature review
- Proposed research methodology (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, concept analysis, knowledge synthesis)
- Proposed plan for data collection
- Proposed time-line for the completion of the research
- Estimated budget (if applicable)
- Ethics considerations

Proposal approval by the supervisory committee is required prior to submission of an application for ethics review.

Human Participants

The University regulates the conduct of all research involving humans in accordance with the most current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (hereafter referred to as the Tri-Council Policy Statement), as the minimal standard. University policies and Tri-Council guidelines offer structures and processes that offer guidance for the design and implementation of a research study. The tri-council policy statement can be obtained from: <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/index/>

For conduct of research involving human participants and/or human biological materials, UVic faculty, students, and staff must obtain research ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB). The HREB is how the Tri-Council guidelines are implemented at UVic and HREB approval must be obtained prior to beginning the research. It may take several weeks to receive ethics approval, so it is best to factor this into a research study timeline. For more information about this review please see:

<http://www.uvic.ca/research/conduct/home/regapproval/humanethics/index.php>

In any research involving humans, we have an obligation to ensure that their rights are protected. Specifically, we need to consider and plan for: a) risks of the project (versus benefits), b) confidentiality and anonymity of data, and c) informed consent.

If you are interested in conducting research that involves Indigenous people you will need to work in partnership with the community involved. Guidelines for research in Indigenous

communities are covered in Chapter 9 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement. More information can be obtained from:

<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/resources-ressources/reports-rapports/arei-iera/>

Examples of research studies that have been conducted and completed by MN students in the SON can be accessed through the following link on the UVicSpace electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) web site:

[UVicSpace – Learning and Research repository](#)

Obtaining Research Funding

Although most MN theses are small in scope and consequently do not require a large research budget, some students seek funding to assist with costs associated with travel for data collection, small gifts for participants, or transcription of interviews for analysis. Please see the School of Nursing website for funding opportunities. Your supervisor may also have suggestions for you.

Preparation and Approval of Thesis

The Thesis committee is responsible for reviewing the thesis, determining that the written research report is acceptable, and recommending that the student proceed to the oral examination.

The design and format of the thesis will be determined to some extent by the nature of the inquiry. The following headings are common (dependent on the type of study):

- Chapter 1: Introduction and identification of the issue/problem for study
- Chapter 2: The Literature Review
- Chapter 3: Methodology
- Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings
- Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings
- Chapter 6: Summary, conclusions & recommendations, implications
- References and Appendices

The thesis is judged based on the degree to which or the quality by which the student fulfills the goals or objectives identified in the research proposal and by the requirements set out by FGS. In addition, the quality of scholarship and the contribution that the research makes to nursing is assessed.

Oral Examination/Thesis Defense

FGS requires a final oral examination of a Thesis. Each thesis committee member must agree that the thesis is satisfactory, and the student is ready for oral examination. The examination committee includes the supervisor, the committee member(s), and the external examiner. In addition, FGS appoints a neutral Chair to conduct the examination. For MN theses, the external examiner is typically selected from within the UVIC faculty.

There are five possible outcomes of the oral examination:

1. The thesis is acceptable subject to editorial changes as presented and the oral examination is acceptable;
2. The thesis is acceptable subject to minor revisions and the oral examination is acceptable;
3. The thesis is acceptable subject to major revisions and the oral examination is acceptable;
4. The examination is adjourned;
5. The examination is failed.

Upon successful completion of the examination and completion of any required revisions, the student sends the supervisor, committee member(s), and Graduate Program Administrative Assistant (gradnurs@uvic.ca) a final copy of the thesis. An electronic copy [PDF file] is placed on the University of Victoria, School of Nursing Website.

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