THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Nursing
Vancouver Campus

NURS 599 Thesis Guidelines
Updated July, 2025

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Thesis Preparation

Always refer to G+PS policies and examples for MSN thesis preparation.

- G+PS Sample thesis
- G+PS Resources for Thesis Preparation and Checking

The following sections provide more information about the policies & processes that are specific to UBC School of Nursing theses.

Overview & Context

Students in the MSN program may complete their program requirements by completing a master's thesis (NURS 599 – 9 credits). Students undertaking the thesis conduct a research project which involves planning and implementing a study using systematic inquiry and applying a research methodology to answer questions relevant to the discipline of nursing. The thesis is completed under the supervision of a thesis supervisor and committee.

The research project can be:

- The collection of primary (new) data or secondary analysis of existing data from a larger research study or survey to answer questions relevant to nursing or health care.
- A policy analysis, historical analysis, or discourse analysis to critique or question established assumptions, add to existing policy or explain events or occurrences in context and time. Such projects involve the analysis of existing data or evidence such as archival data, reports, and other documents.
- Philosophical or ethical inquiry to address key practice issues in nursing and health care.
- A rigorous, systematic review and synthesis of the literature to answer questions relevant to nursing or health care (i.e., a Rapid Evidence Assessment). Please note more delimited literature reviews, such as an *integrative review or scoping review,* are within the scope of the 3-credit Capstone.

When students undertake a master's thesis, they will have conducted all phases of the research process:

- Identify the research problem, topic or question or select a component of their supervisor's research
- Review existing knowledge in nursing and health care relevant to the problem, topic or question
- Create the study design, methodology and methods (including how data will be analyzed and interpreted) methods determination, analysis and interpretation)
- Generated the research findings
- Discussed the relevance of the findings and the implications for nursing and health care practice, education, policy, leadership, research and knowledge translation, as tailored to the topic.

In undertaking a thesis, the student and faculty members are guided by policies of the Faculty of Graduate and Post-doctoral Studies (G+PS) and School of Nursing.

Preparation for the MSN Thesis

The MSN thesis is an original scholarly project in which the student applies knowledge and skills acquired through coursework in the MSN program and through other training and work experiences (e.g., research assistantships, project involvement). Students should begin work on their thesis proposal early in their program, but are normally expected to have completed all four core MSN courses prior to finalizing the MSN thesis proposal. Please review MSN Handbook for the list of core courses. Supervisors may advise the student to obtain further preparation in the research methods or approaches to be used in their thesis, through coursework in nursing or other relevant disciplines.

School of Nursing Policies Related to the MSN Thesis

- The topic for the thesis must be of significance and relevance to nursing and health care.
- Students are required to maintain registration in NURS 599 from the beginning of their program.
- Once the proposal has been completed and approved by the thesis committee, the student is expected to

make continual progress towards the thesis completion.

- Lack of regular contact with supervisor and unsatisfactory progress towards completion of the thesis could results in:
    - A request to meet with MSN Program Coordinator to discuss progress.
    - A requirement for the supervisor and student to develop a detailed learning contract.
    - Other consequences such as voluntary withdrawal, withdrawal for academic non-progress.
- University policies on plagiarism and academic misconduct apply to the thesis.

Identifying a Supervisor

Students are encouraged to meet with the MSN Coordinator to start identifying their thesis topic interests and selected a potential supervisor after completing 6 – 9 course credits or two terms of study. Once a student has secured a supervisor, they consult with their supervisor for program planning and potential electives and/or directed studies or research courses to support the thesis work.

When approaching a supervisor to invite their interest and availability to supervisor, students are encouraged to email the faculty member to:

- Introduce themselves
- Share a few points about their MSN goals as context for the thesis
- Provide 1-2 paragraph(s) about their potential thesis topic, question or idea. Faculty do not expect students to have a perfectly designed study in mind; this is a collaborative process to refine between the student and supervisor.

The identification of a supervisor needs to follow the guidelines provided by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Faculty eligible to supervise an MSN thesis include: Faculty who are also members of G+PS, active emeriti faculty (with permission from the MSN Program Coordinator), and other university affiliates (with permission from the MSN Program Coordinator). A list of faculty who can supervise at the master's thesis can he found here: MSN faculty supervisors. In the tab that says "supervisor eligibility" select **MSN Thesis.** If students have questions about faculty eligibility to supervise a thesis, they are encouraged to consult with the MSN Program Coordinator.

G+PS provides a useful resource for students and their supervisors on the development of the thesis – and the working relationship supporting this development between the supervisor and students.

Program Notification and Approval

After the student has confirmed a faculty member who has agreed to serve as their thesis supervisor, the student must officially notify academic.support@nursing.ubc.ca.

- The student sends an email to academic.support@nursing.ubc.ca with the following information:
    - Name, Student Number, Faculty member's name
- Graduate Student Support will follow up with the faculty member and Program Coordinator to confirm approval.
- Once the request is approved, the student will be notified via Workday

Thesis Committee Membership

- Supervisory committees require a minimum of three members (including the Supervisor).
- Normally, two members must hold faculty positions in the School of Nursing and be members of G+PS.
- Membership must meet the requirements of G+PS.

Qualifications for Thesis Supervisor

- The supervisor must be an assistant, associate or full professor, or a professor emerita approved to serve as supervisor. Normally the supervisor will have had significant experience on at least one master's thesis committee in the School of Nursing in order to be familiar with the expected standards and supervision guidelines within the University of British Columbia.
- Newly appointed faculty members may select a more experienced faculty member to join the committee. This senior committee member may be designated co-supervisor, and serve as the second committee member.
- At least two committee members must be members of G+PS. The third committee member may be another faculty member or an individual whose expertise in the content or methods would facilitate development of the work, but who is not a member of a faculty. This person will be chosen in consultation with the supervisor. Specifically, committee members may be drawn from the list of adjunct professors and from the ranks of emeriti faculty.
- Committee membership may include faculty members from outside the School of Nursing, from other departments at UBC, or from other universities. In this case, a short resume about the committee member should be included in the student's file.
- Committee membership is determined in consultation with the supervisor to ensure requisite expertise and congruence with G+PS policies.

Adding Committee Members to Your Student Record

Selection of committee members occurs in collaboration with your supervisor. Once you and your supervisor have determined who will be serving on your committee, and confirmed this with the faculty members involved, you need to notify the MSN Program Coordinator.

- This request is submitted by the student or supervisor
- The student or supervisor sends an email to academic.support@nursing.ubc.ca with the following information:
    - Name, Student Number, Selected faculty members' names for committee membership
    - If the faculty being nominated are not members of G+PS, students should include contact information for the faculty member being nominated.
- Graduate Student Support will follow up with faculty members nominated, the student's supervisor, and Program Coordinator to confirm approval.
- Once the request is approved, the student will be notified via email.

Any subsequent changes in the makeup of the supervisory committee need to be made in consultation with the current supervisor and the MSN Program Coordinator. These are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Student Responsibilities:

- Takes methods and supportive substantive courses to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for the conduct of the thesis.
- Consults with the supervisor to identify potential committee members to support the proposed thesis.
- Meets with the supervisor and committee members to verify the thesis topic and to agree on:
    - Approach for addressing the research problem (method)
    - Tentative timetable outlining proposed frequency of contacts with committee chair and members
- Follows the G+PS & School policies for written assignments and preparation of graduate theses.
- Submits materials to supervisory committee for review allowing **for a two-week response time** unless otherwise negotiated. To expedite the process, and depending on the work plan established by the committee, the **student normally works most closely with the supervisor until drafts of the proposal/chapters are ready for review by the other committee members.**
- Discusses entry with desired agency/agencies in consultation with the supervisor and in accordance with ethical guidelines.
- Presents thesis proposal to the supervisor and the other committee members for approval.
- **Formally ensures the** thesis proposal is approved by the committee and is documented with academic.support@nursing.ubc.ca
- Seeks ethical approval for the proposed study, in consultation with the supervisor, from the appropriate research ethics boards and agencies.
- Sends an email to academic.support@nursing.ubc.ca with their full name, student number and their Thesis Title being identified.
    - Graduate Program Support will notify the Program Coordinator, and the email documenting approval will be filed in student's file for recordkeeping and program progress tracking.
- Works with the supervisor to create and agree to a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding Scholarly Integrity.
- The MOA is sent as a PDF or DOC document to academic.support@nursing.ubc.ca
- Conducts the study as planned and consults with supervisor and committee regularly, particularly if any modifications are required or difficulties are encountered.
- Follows the checklist for NURS 599 requirements to ensure the thesis is submitted correctly and on time to G+PS and the School of Nursing once the written thesis is complete.

The Supervisor:

- Oversees all aspects of the thesis planning, conduct, and submission.
- Meets with the student at the beginning of each term to review the student's Term Progress Report.
- Meets with the student to assist with identifying the research questions and methods/approach.
- Works with the student to identify appropriate committee membership to ensure that the committee includes the required substantive and methodological expertise. Supervises the student in reporting con- firmed committee members to Student Services for updating the student's file.
- Meets with student and committee members to clarify thesis problem/approaches, and to identify committee working patterns and processes, timelines, and expectations regarding review time (minimum two weeks unless otherwise negotiated).
- Provides feedback on drafts of the thesis proposal. Consults with other committee members as required during the proposal development stage. Helps integrate feedback from committee members on various drafts and determines when the proposal has been approved.
- Sends an email to academic.support@nursing.ubc.ca with the title of the student's thesis proposal after committee approval. The supervisor will approve the request, and formalize the completion of the thesis proposal.
- Works with the student to submit and complete appropriate documents to gain appropriate agency research review approval including approval from the UBC Office of Research Ethics.
- Encourages the student to consider submitting their proposal to the internal funding competitions and offers guidance for this process.
- Guides the student through the thesis implementation, analysis, and report writing phases, seeking input from committee members as appropriate, and particularly when modifications are required or difficulties area encountered. Provides timely feedback on submitted materials.
- Is aware of deadline dates for thesis submission to G+PS and whether the thesis will be completed within the student's five-year period of study. Consults with MSN Program Coordinator if any problems are evident or predicted in order to determine appropriate course of action.
- Works with the student to schedule the final thesis presentation to the committee (not evaluated)
- Reviews the checklist for NURS 599 requirements, and carries out supervisor responsibilities to complete the thesis.
- Consults with committee to determine a grade for the written thesis (out of 100%) and submits the grade to graduation@nursing.ubc.ca.
- Assists in identifying opportunities for the student to present or publish work from the thesis, and provides ongoing encouragement and guidance related to presentation and publication.

Each Committee Member:

- Consults with the student and supervisor as required during the thesis process.
- Provides feedback on submitted materials within a two-week period unless otherwise negotiated.

- Meets with the student and other committee members as requested for guidance on specific aspects of the process.
- Approves proposal and evaluates thesis as part of the supervisory committee.
- Works with the supervisor to determine percentage grade on final written thesis submission, and signs the MSN Thesis Approval Form (which is returned to the student).

The Consultant:

- Negotiates involvement on the committee with student and supervisor.
- Meets with student and committee members as required for guidance on specific aspects of the process.
- Communicates any concerns about the research process to the supervisor.

Expectations for the Thesis Proposal

The length and level of detail of the thesis proposal are negotiated between student and committee members depending on the type of research, individual context of the study, and preferences of the committee. Sufficient detail will be required to permit the committee an understanding of the researchable problem, the purpose of the study, the method(s) that will be used in the research, and the anticipated significance of the study. In some cases, this may be accomplished in a brief proposal; in others, committee members may prefer that the proposal include the full rationale for the research, literature review, and discussion of methods to the degree of detail that would be expected in the first 3 chapters of the final thesis.

In cases in which the student's thesis is associated with another research project, the proposal must include sufficient information about the primary project and the component of the research for which the student will be responsible so that the committee can identify the ways in which the student will address all the elements of scholarly inquiry. The student is responsible for accounting for all phases within the research process regardless of whether procedures (such as literature review, data collection, etc.) are conducted independently or with other researchers. Once the proposal is approved, the student will formally request approval on STS, and the supervisor will formally approve their request. Instructions for this are provided under 'Student and Supervisor Responsibilities."

MSN Thesis Components:

The MSN thesis has two required components evaluation and completion:

- o Written document
- o Final presentation to the supervisory committee

Criteria for Evaluation of the MSN Thesis Document

The final evaluation of the written thesis takes content, scholarly nature, and degree of independence demonstrated by the student in the thesis process into consideration. The following criteria are to be met for content:

Identification of the Research Question

A researchable question is identified. A researchable question for the MSN thesis is related to a problem or issue that:

- Is amenable to scientific or philosophical inquiry.
- Is relevant and significant to the field of nursing or health care.
- Has the potential for the breadth and depth of study commensurate with the above characteristics and with the constraints of availability of time and resources.

The research problem is:

- Stated clearly and explicitly.
- Presented in the content of relevant research and theory.

Statement of Purpose

The statement of purpose:

- Follows logically from the identified question.
- Is in the form of declarative statement(s), question(s), aims, or hypotheses.
- Indicates clearly what will be accomplished, and may identify or cue approaches.
- All conceptual words contained in the question and statement of purpose are clearly explained, or operationally defined, where relevant.
- Appropriate assumptions underlying the study are stated.

Literature Review

The literature review:

- Is relevant and appropriate in scope to the identified question and methodological approach.
- Is selective, including influential references.
- Offers a critique of the state of knowledge in the field.
- Provides background on the theoretical underpinnings, study concepts and variables and rationale for the study.

NOTE: When the primary approach of the thesis is a systematic review of literature, concept analysis, or theory development for example, this portion may be brief, and/or integrated into the results section.

Methods

The methods selected:

- Are appropriate for the study of the problem or research question.

- Are adequately explained.
- Are a clear and logical extension of the question and statement of purpose.
- Where pertinent, ensure the protection of the rights of human subjects.
- Result in information that answers the question(s)/hypotheses posed.

The description of the sampling procedure, where pertinent (samples may include a selection of human subjects or a selection of existing data or evidence):

- Specifies pertinent characteristics of the population/texts/documents/media/collections to be sampled and includes definitive description of the sample as appropriate.
- Specifies a priori sample size determination where relevant.
- Where pertinent, indicates that informed consent procedures were followed.
- Indicates the internal and external validity of the study design, if relevant, or discusses appropriate methods to address rigor in conducting the inquiry.
- The data collection methods and procedures are clearly outlined.

The description of any data collection approaches or tools, if relevant:

- Where pre-existing measurement tools are used, includes their known reliability and validity.
- Where new tools are developed for the study, includes the assessment of their reliability and validity.
- Indicates whether the tools or approaches are consistent with the capabilities of the research participants or with the research design, or mode of inquiry.

Method(s) of Analysis

The approach to the analysis is:

- Appropriate for the type of data or evidence collected.
- Supported by documentation as being appropriate.
- If statistical analysis is used, the level of statistical significance accepted is appropriate to the nature of the data and is adequately justified.
- Qualitative or interpretive methods are clearly described in adequate detail to determine their consistency with the design.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results/Findings

The analysis and interpretation of primary sources or of the results/findings portion of the thesis:

- Analysis, interpretation, and results are reported according to the scholarly conventions established by the scholarly community of a particular disciplinary (nursing) and/or methodological approach.
- Includes a description of the data-producing sample, where relevant, or the source of the information.
- Addresses the research question(s)/hypotheses.
- Details the process sufficiently to allow for replication or audit trail, or organizes the points and supporting

information clearly and logically in such a way that it allows others to follow the arguments and weigh the merits.

Discussion/Implications and Conclusions

- The relevance of the findings or conclusions to nursing, to other disciplinary fields, to health, or to health care is stated clearly in the thesis.
- Recommendations for practice, health policy, health administration, philosophy, history, theory, education and/or research are included.

Policy SC6 – Scholarly Integrity Memorandum of Understanding

The University of British Columbia, School of Nursing (NURS), Graduate Curriculum Committee reviewed university Policy SC6 and developed a set of procedures to ensure that the School is appropriately enacting all aspects of the policy concerning expectations of graduate students.

In compliance with Policy SC6, supervisors of graduate students' work must stipulate in writing expectations regarding supervision, compensation (where appropriate), data ownership, publication rights, and commercialization rights.

Procedure: The Graduate Studies Committee developed a template that can be adapted for drafting a memorandum of agreement. All NURS graduate students completing major essays, theses, or dissertations, in cooperation with their supervisors, should complete a memorandum of agreement. The memo should be printed on School of Nursing letterhead and should be co-developed and signed as soon as a faculty member agrees to supervise a student. The letter can be personalized by the supervisor and student. At minimum the letter must include: (a) a statement indicating that the parties are aware of Policy SC6, (b) a statement about authorship, and if relevant, (c) a statement about access to data. Letters can be revised and updated as necessary.

For your information, here is a relevant excerpt from Policy SC6.
Access the full document here: University Council – Policy SC6: Scholarly Integrity

The University is committed to providing an environment that supports the best research and scholarly practices and that fosters UBC Persons' abilities to act honestly, accountably, openly and fairly in the search for and dissemination of knowledge. The University community has always recognized the necessity for and importance of maintaining the highest ethical standards in the conduct of Scholarly Activities, and all UBC Persons are expected to uphold these standards. UBC Persons are personally and directly responsible for the intellectual and ethical quality of their work.

All UBC Persons are personally and directly responsible for the intellectual and ethical quality of their work and must ensure that their Scholarly Activity meets the requirements of all applicable funding agreements, University or other policies, standards of the relevant profession or discipline, and laws and regulations. However, UBC Persons who have committed Scholarly Misconduct may share in the responsibility and be subject to discipline accordingly.

UBC Persons are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the scholarly standards and practices that are generally accepted within the relevant scholarly field and following them honestly, accountably, openly and fairly.

… if they are a principal investigator in any research project, ensuring that the research conditions applicable to the research project, including compensation and practices around supervision, authorship and recording data, are properly articulated in writing and disseminated to all members of the research team prior to engagement in the

project. Templates for such documents are available from the Faculty of Graduate Studies at UBC Vancouver.

Policy SC6 – Memorandum of Agreement

Note to student and supervisor: This form is partially customizable. Please insert the date, fill in the student and faculty member's full name (as registered with UBC) in the first portion, and then customize the second portion of the form based on the nature of your research.

Date:

Memorandum of Agreement: Between [Faculty member name] and [Student name]

Re: Scholarly Integrity at UBC

We acknowledge that is it important for graduate students and their supervisors to be in agreement about issues concerning access to data, and authorship on publications. It is requirement of this university that we agree in writing about these matters (see Policy SC6).

We have both read and agreed to the following points.

Policy SC6: Scholarly Integrity

We will comply with all University standards and policies of scholarly integrity (Policy SC6).

Publication (there are several options listed below; a shared understanding of publication must be placed in writing)

It is the policy of this university to assign authorship based on the level of intellectual contribution to the paper/research. [Student name] is encouraged to publish and present the results of her/his research/scholarly work appropriately recognizing the appropriate contribution of others (e.g., through authorship or acknowledgment).

(Optional and modifiable) if there are potential papers for publication when [Student name] leaves the research team, she/he will have [one calendar year] to draft a manuscript. If, at the end of that time, if she/he has not produced a manuscript, [Faculty member name] will produce the manuscript, but as a senior author and [Student name] will be included as a co-author.

Access to Data (required for thesis and dissertation students only):
Data that are collected by [Student name] will be controlled by [Student name] and must be stored in accordance with university policies and procedures.

Or,

Data that [Student name] is using are part of a larger project. Access to the data is limited to the purposes of the current [thesis/dissertation] project. Following completion of the project [Student name] will no longer have access to the data. Additional access can be negotiated with the project team.

Note: Copies of the letter should be retained by the student and faculty member and a third copy should be uploaded to the Student Tracking System.

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